### “...Deku?”

### Slowly, green eyes turned from the white walls to his other side. There was a white-haired man with red splotches in his hair. It somehow felt normal. Like this was normal. He looked at him and then forward.

### “...Deku, can you… hear me?”

### He nodded back, and tried to sit up. Tried, because pain shot up his body before he could get his head and shoulders up and off the bed. Even though he gritted his teeth, a whimper slid through his lips. A pair of hands shot out to grab him by his shoulders and slowly push him back down onto the bed. Briefly, he felt some panic rise up in his chest, but when he looked up, he saw familiar blue eyes back, just as panicked.

### But those eyes-that shade of blue- was comforting, and he found himself calming down in the bruising grip.

### “...You good?” the man asked quietly, breathless and almost fearful. “You … that… Does it hurt?”

### Yes, of course it hurt. Did these bandages look like they were decorations or something?

### He arched an eyebrow at him.

### “No, that was a dumb question, wasn’t it? I… I just never heard you…” the white-haired man with red splotches trailed off, looking about as confused as Deku felt, before he rubbed his face with his hand. He took a deep breath, a shuddery sound, before he turned back to Deku, looking about four days older. “Well, enough about me. What hurts?”

### He stared at the man next to him and then tilted his head. He opened his mouth to speak what’s been on his mind. His mouth was painfully patched, and it felt like there needles in his throat from how dry it was.

### “...Am I… Deku?” he asked.

### He was on a bed. White sheets and mattress, and he couldn’t recall why. He was in a white room with a counter on one side and cabinets above it and below it. The room was spacious, if a little cold. There was an empty dresser next to him.

### The man next to him, if he didn’t know that he could look any more dreary, proved him wrong. His expression crumbled away, as though all the hope and light in his life was being sucked away. His jaw clenched tightly.

### “Yes,” he said, breathless. “You… that’s what you told us to call you,” he explained.

### Deku, as that was apparently his name, frowned. Useless? He asked people to call him ‘Useless’?

### But the man didn’t look like he was lying, if only because he looked too shocked and upset to lie, and it didn’t feel wrong. The information was easily accepted into his head, like it was a common truth. Perhaps, his name was Useless Deku.

### In all honesty, he was beginning to think that he didn’t want to remember.

### “And you don’t… remember me?” the white-haired man by him asked quietly.

### Deku stared, and he felt like it was on the tip of his tongue. The harder he thought about it, the more his head felt like it would split open. He grabbed his temple, as if it would help get rid of the pain, when the other man spoke up again.

### “No, it’s fine. It’s… Please don’t push yourself. Just… worry about feeling better soon. You took some damage in the last fight.”

### Deku blinked at him. His headache receded back into his head, like a dull ache or a thick blanket made of wool wrapped to smother his brain.

### Fight?

### “Just call me Natsuo,” he said. “I’m one of the uh… doctors here on the base.”

### Base?

### “I… I can’t let you walk around the base on your own at the moment. I will be happy to field any question you might have for now,” he said, sounding more like he was saying things as they came into his head instead of speaking in an organized and calm manner. It must have been a shock to him that he lost his memories. “You’ll…” he hesitated, his eyes drifting from Deku’s face to the bedsheet and back up, and spoke slowly, as though cautious for any negative response. “You’ll need to stay here for a few days to recuperate.”

### Something felt wrong, was this man lying to him? Somehow, Deku didn’t think that was it. There was a different reason why this felt wrong, but he didn’t think it was that he was a liar. It laid on top of his heart, pressing down. It must be something else. He must have forgotten something incredibly important- and it was resting on his chest like a heavy weight.

### But, without more information or anything, Deku decided on compliance. He gave a curt nod to show his understanding.

### In return, the doctor gave a large sigh of relief. His shoulders sagged as he sat back a little in his chair. It almost felt like Natsuo was more happy about this than him.

### There were no windows in this room, so he didn’t really have any way to tell what time it was or anything. His internal clock was no help, and his entire body felt in equal parts energized and exhausted.

### “Why don’t you get some more rest for now?”

### Deku looked down at his body, the copious amounts of bandages as though it was the only thing holding his body together, and nodded. Rest, yes, that made sense. However, even though there was pain lacing through his body, he didn’t feel tired. If anything, he felt restless. Was there something he needed to do?

### His eyes felt drawn to the door. He wanted to leave. He wasn’t sure if he could stand up, and he didn’t know where he would go, but he wanted to leave. The room felt too small.

### Perhaps, if he explained himself, the doctor would be accommodating… Deku blinked at the frantic expression that took over Natsuo’s face when he realized that Deku was looking at the door. Okay, maybe not. Was he a flight risk or something? Why was he being stared at like that? He could barely feel his toes, he doubted that he would be able to stand up without assistance. As his doctor, he should know that to some extent, right?

### There was a knock on the door before the door pushed open and a young man walked in without waiting for any recognition. His most noticeable feature was that half his head was red, and the other half was white. As bizarre as it sounded, it didn’t surprise Deku. Instead, when he saw him, Deku felt relief.

### Like a, oh thank god that this guy is alive, kind of relief.

### "Natsuo-niisan, I brought dinner..." his voice trailed off when he caught sight of Deku. "You're up."

### Deku felt his attention hone in on the food. It smelled absolutely heavenly. What was it? It looked to be in a wide bowl, and there was steam coming off of it. He was suddenly aware of how empty his stomach was and felt his mouth salivate a little.

### "Oh, Shouto, good timing. Deku, this... This is Shouto. He’s uh… my little brother," Natsuo said slowly, pointedly ignoring the alarmed look that his younger brother shot him.

### Deku gave a polite nod, and tried again to sit up. The movement proved to be too painful, because he didn’t get up and his lips immediately twisted into a grimace and his eyebrows furrowed. Before he could fall back though, Natsuo’s too-hot hands came to grab him and helped him up and lean against the wall.

### Still.

### “Hello," he said. His voice sounded scratchy to his ears.

### "Ah, yeah," Shouto awkwardly sketched a proper bow back. His eyes darted from his brother to the young man and he blurted out, "Did you lose your memories?"

### Deku nodded. “Yes,” he said.

### His face twisted into something that looked painful, before he quickly honed it back into a blank expression. Deku had to hand it to him, he was harder to read than Natsuo, who looked like he swallowed a toad whole and was croaking out all his sentences as he thought of them.

### "I see. Please let me know if there is anything I can help with," Shouto said. "I... I will return with more food then."

### "...Shouto...kun?" Deku spoke slowly.

### From the look on the young man's face, it was as though he had slapped him or something.

### "Just..." He cleared his throat, “Just Shoto is fine. Is there… is there something you would like?”

### "...May I come with you?"

### Natsuo shot up to his feet, his chair clattering behind him. Deku's hands suddenly felt empty, as he felt all of his senses suddenly open up, and snapped his attention to Natsuo, his heart rate shooting through the roof in a painful way. The young doctor looked wrong-footed as he opened his mouth and closed it again, before clenching his jaw tightly.

### "I don't think that's a good idea," he said, voice too quiet to sound worrying, but too certain to sound fearful. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to startle you.”

### Deku stared at him for a long moment, and then looked back to the ceiling. The adrenaline that pumped through his veins in his surprise kicked his thinking into high gear as he revisited all the information that occurred in the past few minutes. His body trembled.

### "Your worries," the young man said quietly, "is it concern or fear?"

### Green eyes, sharper like a knife, found that familiar blue.

### "Is it because I'm injured or because I'm unarmed?"

### There was a long silence. Deku waited for an answer to his unknowingly callous question. Was this too forward? Was he being rude? Without any previous experience to base his actions on, he had nothing but curiosity.

### It had bothered him. They were in some sort of infirmary, wasn’t he? Then, why did the doctor have a gun and a small knife strapped to him? The teenager who came in didn’t knock, and was armed as well. Two daggers and a gun holsted to his thigh-and that was just what he could see.

### And, between them, he saw four ways to disarm them and leave. He couldn’t remember his name or what he looked like, but he could plan out an escape- injuries and all.

### "I..."

### He waited patiently, but he had a good idea about what was going on.

### "...Just be careful," Natsuo said quietly, taking the food from Shouto's hand. He gave the young man a meaningful stare and then nodded at Deku. "I... You are the indisputable leader here," he repeated himself as he looked down at the bowl, "But there are plenty of people that might take advantage of you in this state."

### Deku stared at him.

### “...Me?” he said, feeling as though he was tossed into a pit and free-falling. “I’m the what?”

### The wry smile on Natsuo’s face was not helpful.

### “...Why don’t you eat dinner first?” he asked, motioning for Shoto, “And we can fill you in with what we can.”

### This time, when Natsuo’s large hands came to his shoulder, he helped him up into a sitting position. Deku realized that his hands were shaking.

### **1. 10 Years Ago - [+Shoto]**

Deku frowned, but gave a curt nod. Him? A leader? It didn’t sound real. A leader called Useless… was this a joke? Perhaps, was he a placeholder of some sort? Someone that looked like the leader so that there was an easy escape? What was the word… scapegoat, was it?

No, no, Natsuo looked too hurt for him to consider that. The thought that this man was acting didn’t even cross his mind, that’s how certain he was about this. And yet, it all sounded false.

Like, somehow, Deku couldn’t consider himself as someone important.

“Let’s see… well, the world as we knew it ended a few years ago, like… four years ago. Or at least, it’ll be five years this summer,” he began. “And then you saved us.”

There was a brief silence, as though to indicate the end of the story.

“That’s it?”

Natsuo nodded, “Yeah, that’s pretty much what happened. Everyone and everything is what you managed to pull together and protect till now. So, what questions do you have?”

“...I’m… the leader?”

“Yeah,” the man said, nodding his head. “Whatever you want, we do.”

“...What are… some examples of things that I do?”

“You save people, collect supplies, and everyone listens to you,” the man said, listing them slowly. “More specifically? Uh… when you go on patrol, you tell who goes where.”

Shouto eyed Natsuo, “No, not really,” he said with a frown. “If you tell us not to kill something, we won’t.”

Deku stared at him for a moment and then nodded, his eyebrows furrowing. He tapped his knee, and brought his hand up to his mouth as he began to mutter.

“...they say leader but there’s no definite example of when leadership is used. That means that the leader here is a figurehead of some sort, or someone that they default back to. Maybe the group here isn’t big enough for them to try again, or this is too comfortable for them to change it otherwise. It doesn’t sound like my word is very heavy or important than. Doing as I please for the moment will be fine as long as I don’t push it, so finding out those limits should take the first priorities…”

“Uh… Deku?”

He jerked out of his thoughts, and his eyes flew up to their face.

“...Sorry,” he said, bowing his head a little. “...Did you say something?”

The brothers exchanged a look, and then turned back. They looked remarkably similar. “Uh, no, it’s not…”

“How’s the food?” Shouto asked.

Deku took that as a chance to start digging in. He took a bite, then another. The food was warm, and before his stomach was filled with food, the warmth flooded his entire body.

“It’s delicious,” he said. “The texture is smooth and the temperature is perfect. The taste is very familiar, and it brings a nostalgic feeling. Oh, this is rice gruel, isn’t it?” Deku turned to the other two, his eyes bright in his excitement that he remembered something. “I see, then I guess that my memory is more temporary. Then, the more exposure I get to things I used to do, more things might be triggered into being remembered.”

Halfway done with his bowl, he turned to the two.

“Then, when I properly remember you, I’ll give you a heartfelt gratitude, as the person you remember.”

The look on the two’s faces said that it was the last thing that they wanted, and poisoned Deku’s good mood. He dropped his gaze and focused on finishing the meal instead.

He got about halfway through the dish when he felt his stomach lurch. Abruptly, he stopped eating and covered his mouth with a hand.

“...Sorry,” he said quietly, “I don’t think I can finish this.”

The guilt in his heart didn’t find it as forgiving. And it worried into his heart. These people were kind enough to bring him food, yet he refused to finish it? These people were going to nurse him back to health, but he can’t reciprocate in the most minimal way and accept it? Perhaps, this was the kind of person he was. Useless Leader who Wastes Gratitude.

“...It’s alright,” Natsuo said, “Eat what you can.”

“...I would like to go on a small walk,” Deku said, feeling a little stronger now that his stomach was full. More importantly, he wanted to see if a walk would make him remember. “To stretch out my legs. It might also help me with digestion. The food was great, it really was, I just…” he eyed the dish and then back. “If uh… it isn’t too much trouble?”

“...No, it’s not any trouble at all.”

Deku really, really wanted to get his memories back. The sooner, the better, and he’ll understand why they were looking at him like that, and he’ll know what to do and say so that they didn’t wear that expression again.

### **2. Rings - [+Twice & Toga]**

Getting ready to leave was hard. It was partly because his body ached with every movement, and trying to find his balance on his legs had him shaking. He was in a makeshift yukata, dark navy blue with a gray sash, but no one else was dressed like him.

“I-I’m sorry,” he said, when he failed to get up by himself and had to be caught by someone else. His hands clutched tightly onto Shoto’s shirt as he flustered and stammered. To think that, he couldn’t even get up on his feet. “I’m really sorry-”

“You don’t remember,” Shouto said firmly, “So you don’t know this, but you’ve done a lot for me.” His hands grabbed Deku’s elbows to help steady him to sit on the bed. “You don’t have to apologize to me, because I’ve always wanted to be useful to you.”

Right when he was about to step back, Deku’s hands fell to his and gripped them tightly. For a split second, the apologetic look on his face morphed into a sharp gaze. It quickly disappeared, however, and he shook his head. His entire body trembled under the weight of trying to stand up, and he fell back onto the bed.

“Uh, lemme get you a wheelchair or something,” Natsuo said, standing up. He made for the door, and as soon as he opened it, he was shoved backwards when a pair of blonds bounced in, one of them in a mask.

“Deku, my dear!”

“If he woke up, you should have said something. // I’m going to kill him myself!”

Shouto stood in front of Deku in an instant, his eyes narrowing into a glare as he pulled one of his hands up in front of him. The room felt even quieter, a different kind of tension flooding in instead. Despite how Natsuo and Shouto acted, however, Deku did not feel nervous when he saw the newcomers.

“Oh, oops,” the blond girl said to Natsuo with an unrepentant grin, “Sorry about that, lil’ boyo.”

Natsuo, who had managed to brace himself against the counter, clenched his jaw, but he didn’t say anything. His eyes narrowed and the temperature of the room dropped.

Uncaring about the state of the doctor, the two skipped up to Deku, giving Shouto a dismissive gaze as they passed him.

“Ne, ne, you wouldn’t believe what Jin and I found in the last house!”

“Ta-da!” Jin , as he was suddenly introduced to him, said, brandishing a ring. “There’s four! One for each of us! // We’ll single-handedly keep the divorce rates high!”

Deku looked at the rings to Natsuo and Shouto, and then back to the two in front of him. Giving the resignated, and almost apprehensive expression on the brothers face, he wanted to say that this wasn’t normal. However, neither of them did anything.

And more importantly, Deku felt warm. Four rings, for the three of them, but he felt warm. Was it because of the open adoration on their faces? Was it because they came storming into his room, almost bouncing off the walls in their excitement to share this small bit of happiness here?

“...Thank you,” he said, dipping his head into a shallow bow that made his neck ache.

The two seemed to shine even brighter, or maybe it was because the room was dark to begin with. He wasn’t certain. The fluorescent lights looked to be clean and in good condition, like the rest of this room.

“Ah, no need to act so distant!” the blond girl said, a dreamy look in her eyes. “Whatever we find is yours anyways, but this is something that we can share together!”

“...I see,” Deku lifted his hand up, and waited for them to drop the ring into his palm. When they did so, he lifted it up to inspect it, “What a pretty color. Where did you get this?”

Natsuo groaned, burying his face into his hands, shocking Deku.

He looked to see the two blonds peering at him carefully. Did he say something wrong? He looked to Shouto, who had a pinched expression as he closed his eyes and looked to the ground, guilty.

“...Is there something wrong?” he asked.

“Uh… I just… didn’t think you’d… care,” Jin admitted.

“He lost his memories,” Natsuo said, and when Shouto’s head snapped up, waved it off. “There’s no point in hiding it.”

...Hiding it? This was something he was supposed to hide? Natsuo had mentioned that there would be people to be wary of, but perhaps it wasn’t these two?

“More than hiding it-”

“-wait, wait, so you forgot everything?” Jin said, turning back to him and cutting off Shouto. “You don’t remember my name? Or that time you got impaled by nails saving my life? Or that time I lost all my clothes and you found my underwear? You forgot all of those?”

“Excuse me, nails?” Natsuo spoke up, stepping forward with a shocked expression on his face.

Deku dropped his gaze in shame. It would appear that these were people who held him in genuinely high regard. He didn’t doubt Natsuo, but having someone else, unrelated to the situation at hand, come in and support his words was different. Deku dipped his head forward, and hoped his sincerity would come across.

“Sorry,” he said.

“So, we can start all over again,” Toga said quietly. Her eyes shined upon that realization, a smile growing on her face as she regarded them. “And you won’t remember anything from the past?”

Deku stared at her and spoke without thinking, as though this was his gut reaction to this situation.

“...Is it really that nice to have a stranger with a familiar face?”

If it was his gut reaction, then they were learning just as much about Deku, as Deku was. From the wide-eyed expression on their faces, Deku didn’t know if they were learning about him for the first time, or if he was performing against expectations.

He managed to apologize, but the atmosphere had gotten stale. The ring in his hand felt heavy. He wouldn’t wear it until he remembered who they were, since it felt like he was treating their feelings too cheaply otherwise. Eventually, the two blond excused themselves, a little bit dazed and throwing one last look at Deku.

His head started to hurt, but now more than ever, he wanted to remember.

### **3. Omamori - [Mirio]**

The first place he managed to get to was the waiting room for the medic wing. Well, that was what it was used for, but it looked like a lobby for any regular apartment.

It took several hours, including an extra nap when the earlier burst of social interactions left him winded, but he was here now.

Deku wasn’t sure what it used to be, but there were chairs of different styles around the perimeter of the room, with plush mats in the center. Almost every chair had a small coffee table to the left and right of them, looking to be shared between arm seats. From how stylistically different everything looked, it felt as though everything in the room was picked up from different places and areas and assimilated into the same room. There were plastic chairs, large cushiony-armchairs, and rocking chairs, all fitted with different pillows of shapes and sizes, like puzzle pieces that were forced together in that motley way.

Yet, it felt normal.

The stretch of hallway between the couch and the infirmary room he was from was arduous, and he couldn’t help but feel worthless. Even though he had no recollection about it, it felt like he should have been able to go much further. The disappointment made a home in his heart, weighing down on it like snow on a rickety house.

Still, compared to when he started, he was glad that he could make it here all on his own. He nearly collapsed into the closest chair, and took a deep breath. His entire body trembled from the effort of keeping himself up. Sinking deeply into the chair, he tried to regain his breath and recover his energy. The sound of footsteps slowly inched louder.

“Oh, Deku! Good morning, well I suppose it’s well in the afternoon, now!”

Another blond, with a wide grin and built like a truck, came up to him. He wore a friendly smile on his face as he waved at him. His confidence was blinding, and Deku wondered what he was thinking about to have such jovial energy. From the glimmer of the teeth to his bright, blond, nearly illuminating hair, he was shining top-down. He had a spring in his step as he approached.

From what he understood of Natsuo's explanations, they were trying to rebuild after society had fallen apart with the sudden appearance of monster creatures. Looking at the radiance the blond exuded, he didn’t think that any destruction of any kind has ever happened.

“I heard you lost all your memories. So I figured that if you’re looking for things to jog your memory, this might help! Here, the last book I saw you reading!”

A book? Yes, that would provide some insight about who he used to be, wouldn’t it?

He smiled back.

“Thank you…” he trailed off, when he realized that he didn’t know what his name was.

“Mirio’s fine,” the blond said, passing the book to him.

“...Then, thank you, Mirio.”

The grin on his face was bright enough that it could banish all the shadows in the world. He quickly looked down at the book, while the blond took a seat next to him. He was much closer than Deku would have preferred, but he kept his eyes on the book. It wouldn’t do to say something to someone who was obviously trying to help him. It would be rude, and Deku didn’t want to do anything that might dim that radiance.

The book was an anthology of children fables, of some sorts. From his brief skimming, he felt like these were familiar, but they didn’t bring any concrete memories up. A lost cause, in that sense, but he would enjoy reading these at a later time. At the moment, it was hard to focus when he could feel the intense staring next to him.

"...This is…"

Deku's fingers slid down the bookmark that held his place in the book, in the middle of a story about the hard-working tortoise and the lazy-but-talented hare. An omamori. Looking at it, he could see that it was a little worn from being stuffed in a book, and probably homemade since it made from denim and sloppy embroiders. But it was gently taken care of. No signs of unforeseen rips or the likes. The feeling was too nostalgic, and it made his eyes burn.

"They made that for New Years," Mirio said, his eyes shining and breathless. "I can't believe you kept it." He was so close that he could feel his heat.

"... Do I usually throw them away?"

The blond blinked back, surprised by what he said or the fact that he said anything at all. Deku wasn't certain. He leaned back, as though space would help him think.

"I…. Uh…. Hm… you know, I don't really know."

The blond looked at the bookmark and then back up to Deku with a crooked grin.

"I thought that you would hold onto things, but they didn't actually mean anything to you, I guess,” Mirio explained. “You’ve always struck me as the kind of guy that didn’t like or hate anything, they were useful or they weren’t.” He paused and made a face, “That sounds really cold, but I never really thought that you were a cold guy. Distant, but not cold. Does that… Does that make sense?”

“...Is that so?” Deku asked quietly. His fingers rested on the bookmark, just to feel his heart flutter again. He looked back to Mirio and the beaming smile he gave just a moment before. When it was close to him, he felt conscious of himself. But the thought to chase it away made him upset. In that case, then he should clear this up right now, since it was obvious what he thought. “I think you are more precious than that.”

He looked up, and caught the glassy-eyed look on the blond face. He sniffled loudly, before he leaned back with a wide grin.

"Ah, I feel like a huge weight's been taking off my chest," he sighed, relaxing his head into his hands. "I know that it doesn't really count since you don't really remember, but if that's your instinctual response, I think that's a good thing."

He grinned brightly, and Deku smiled back.

The people on base were kind people. Even though they didn't know if he would consider them important, they had given him this omamori, one that promised to be protect him from misfortune. If he saved and led them (even if he doubted that), did that mean that he was a kind person, too? He would like to think so. Otherwise, he was a scapegoat ready to be sacrificed by people who could fake this warmth and generosity.

And he didn’t know how he felt about that.

### **4. Lost - [Yaoyozuro (and Shindo)]**

It was almost laughable. If he didn’t feel so confused, he might have actually laughed. He looked to the left, then the right. Everything looked different than when he came out, was that even possible? Could it be that this was why Natsuo was so against him going out?

Where was he?

He made three right turns, he was certain, so shouldn't he be back at the front of the make-shift infirmary? He retired to the room earlier to drop off the book, but went back out so he could get used to walking again. His body still felt stiff. He figured that it wouldn’t do much harm to get some fresh air.

What’s the worst that could happen?

He looked to the left and right again. Instead, now he was between two buildings. Both of them were a boring cement-gray but had crude paintings of safari animals drawn on them. Despite how disproportionate the animals looked, with lop-sided eyes and strange positioning, the sight of it made his heart grow warm.

The world may have ended, but clearly, it wouldn’t be enough to stop an aspiring artist.

He doesn't know where he was, but he didn’t feel alarmed. He took a deep breath, the cold air making small clouds appear from his mouth before shifting upwards. A shiver broke through his body. Wrapping his arms around his body, he looked around again. This really wasn't the time to be admiring the poorly drawn pictures, was it?

He didn’t even think to ask for a jacket. So here he was, standing in a yukata, in a pair of slippers, in the snow. Not his smartest move, but at least he can’t feel anything but the cold.

Still, he couldn't bring his eyes away from it. There was something about it that he didn't want to be pulled away from. His breath crystalized in front of him, and he was starting to lose feeling in his toes and fingers, but his eyes dragged back to the pictures and his heart felt warm. Was it possible? To turn to ice while your heart beat so fondly over something he couldn’t remember?

"There you are! Goodness, aren't you cold?"

A large blanket came around him suddenly, and he stared at the worried expression of a beautiful young woman in front of him. Her black hair came down around her arms, her beanie keeping it out of her face as she secured the blanket around his shoulders. Unlike himself, she was in a parka and thick snow-pants, complete with mittens and a scarf. Similar to Mirio, she towered over him. He blinked at her and then nodded his head. Was everyone here bigger than him?

"It's... really cold," he said, teeth chattering.

Her expression turned pinched, and she bit her lips. Without hesitation, she pulled her scarf off to wrap around his neck twice, covering him from his ears to his collarbone with ease. From her hands, a bright light emitted before two small bags appeared in her hands. She placed them into his hands and the heat from the small pouches flooded his senses.

Handwarmers.

He worried, if she gave him her supplies, wouldn’t she get cold?

The expression on her face shifted. Did he speak aloud?

"Please excuse me then. I will bring both of us to someplace warmer," she said, and proceeded to scoop Deku, blanket and all, into her arms.

The young man jerked, his heartrate jumping in panic as the woman hefted him up like he didn't weigh a thing. He gave a sharp intake of air, and felt pain lace his side. He tried not to flail, and her arms secured around him tightly. She was stronger than she looked.

"S-sorry about that, Deku, but this will be faster," she explained.

She said this as she began to jog back. He wasn't in a rush, so there was no need for her to panic or rush so much. He could walk on his own as well. He was just lost, but that's it.

"Ah! Yaomo-chan!"

"Shindo-san!"

A young man appeared, taller and thicker than 'Yaomo' who was holding him, but not quite as imposing as Mirio, and he gave a nod. He turned and his eyebrows rose when he saw Deku.

"Deku," he nodded at him with an award-winning smile, friendly and kind, “Up and already causing trouble I see.”

“Shindo-san,” Yaomo’s voice was ready to scold.

“Ah, sorry, sorry. I meant to ask if you need any help,” he said, not at all repentant.

"No, we'll be alright," she replied back curtly, "Thank you for your concern. Deku was wandering without a jacket. I was going to take him to the longue to warm up."

Shindo stared at her for a few more seconds, his expression turning blank for a brief second before his smile returned and he leaned back. With a refreshing grin, he gave a nod.

"Alright, I'll let the others know that we found him."

...Others?

But Deku's mouth opened before he could stop himself.

"Others?"

The two jolted, like they were expecting him to say anything. Actually, now that he was bundled up, he understood how cold he was before.

"Ah... Mirio-san said that to keep an eye out... but there's no need to worry-"

"Did I make trouble?" Deku asked. From the way Shindo suddenly dropped his gaze, he understood. "...Sorry about that," he said. He dipped his head forward just a little bit, to show his sincerity. "Thank you for worrying about me."

Shindo's mouth fell open. Was he wrong? Did he read the situation wrong?

However, the young man quickly caught himself. He straightened up and gave a full bow. The refreshing aspects about him faded into a polite young man, and Deku felt as though he had taken something from him.

"No, no, no, after everything that you've done for us, this much is nothing," he said before standing up properly again. His eyes locked with Deku, a far-cry from that comfortable grin he gave just a moment before, and spoke swiftly, “Please excuse me."

He left shortly afterwards, and if Deku didn't know any better, he would think that the man was running away.

"Shindo-san is probably feeling a little responsible for what happened," Yaomo said to him quietly.

"...Responsible?"

She faltered, as she kept moving forward. "Well uh... From what he reported, it sounded like he requested back-up and you came. You were injured while giving assistance..."

"...And it resulted in my current state," Deku finished for her. He placed his hand gingerly on his side as they entered the next building. The pain had subsided considerably than when he first woke up, but he supposed that medicine, rest and food did that.

The longue that she brought him into was in the building next to the infirmary. Now that he could see the front of the buildings, he understood that. It would appear that he would have been fine as long as he kept walking forward.

As they passed through the entranceway, they walked through the hallway until she carried him all the way into the longue. The walls were made of brick and the floor of stone, but with the carpets and rugs that adorned the area, it felt well-lived in. There were couches in a semi-circle near a large fireplace, and there were large tables behind them and close to the door they entered from.

There were several people in the room, but she brushed past all of them. Deku looked at them in interest, seeing people that didn't quite look human was fascinating but he could feel his skin crawl at the number of eyes that focused on him. He imagined that it went both ways and kept his eyes on his lap.

"Here, are you comfortable? Is this okay? I will bring you a warm drink in a moment, is hot chocolate okay?" she asked when she placed him down on the couch. She kneeled in front of him, her eyebrows pinched, and Deku felt the warmth of the fireplace caress him in equal amounts of her gentle gestures.

"...Yes, thank you, Yaomo," he said, dipping his head into a bow towards her.

“Y-yaomo?” she gasped.

He tilted his head, “... I heard Shindo call you that, is… that not your name?”

She flustered, “Oh, I mean, normally, you just call me Momo, but I… If you would like,” her cheeks turned a dark red, “You could call me Yaomo.”

He nodded. “Then, thank you, Yaomo,” he repeated. For a lot of reasons. There seemed to a consistently growing list of the people that he held gratitude for.

"Oh no, not at all!" she said, frantically shaking her head and her hands. She dropped her hands into her lap. "Truly, if there is anything that I could do for you, please let me know. I... You've done so much for us all this time," she gave a broad smile, "I would like to return that favor, if at all possible."

Deku felt something in his chest harden. The look in her face felt familiar in a way that made the bile rise up to his throat. He couldn’t pinpoint the reason why he felt like it, but before he could stop himself, he opened his mouth, and the words came out like bubbling lava.

“Is that the kind of person I am?” he asked quietly. He thought back to the omamori. “Someone that would make you feel like you’re living to pay back a debt? The place that was built here," he asked, his mind traveling back to the walls covered in art, "was it built out of debt?"

It didn’t make him sad or as upset as he thought it would. And it wasn’t quite disappointment that sat in his heart either. He didn’t really know how to explain that aching vacancy inside of him. He could only hope that this feeling wasn’t his own.

And he didn’t know what he would do if he remembered everything and he still felt empty.

### **5. Anniversary - [Toyomitsu]**

"Ta-da! Deku, here is your hot chocolate!"

Deku looked up to where a large, large, large man, who was as round as he was jovial and bigger than anyone else he's seen on base, grinned down at him. If he thought that Mirio was built like a truck, then the man in front of him was a building. In his hands was a cup that looked pitifully small.

He stared for another moment before he lifted both of his hands. The cup, in his hands, looked far too big. It was handed to him slowly and gently, so that he could gradually get used to the weight of the hot drink, and his heart was as warm as his hands. He brought the drink down to his lap once he had a hold of it. It was filled about halfway, and it wasn't scalding hot. The person who prepared this must have been aware that he was still recovering and had adjusted it accordingly.

"T-Thank you," he said, "uhm..."

"Taishiro’s fine," the blond said with a wide grin. "And you're welcome." He motioned to the place next to him, "Do you mind if I join you?"

The young man, feeling as though it would be improper to say anything other than yes, swallowed his discomfort and nodded his head. Taishiro's grin stretched even wider as he sat down next to him, the seat sinking enough that Deku had to reposition himself.

"Oops, sorry about that," he said brightly and completely unapologetic. "So, how are you feeling?"

"...Warm," Deku replied honestly. He took a sip of the hot chocolate, and swore he could feel how the liquid rushed around his system, and made him warm all around.

"That's good!" the blond said, leaning back. His head rested against the back of the couch in an uncomfortable way, because of how much taller he was. It must not have been that uncomfortable, because he took a deep breath and relaxed. "There's probably a hundred things you want to talk about, right? What's up? I'm not the smartest person here or anything, but I should be able to answer most questions."

Deku nodded slowly, like he was just agreeing for the sake of it. Right when the blond looked like he was going to speak again, however, he spoke up.

"Where do we get chocolate?"

"That's your first question?" the blond asked, raising his eyebrow at him incredulously. Still, he crossed his arms over his chest and thought hard. "Hm... If it's the expired powder stuff from Before, we got a little stash of it in the back. No, wait, we probably finished it out since it was all expired. Or, Yaoyozuro, uh, the girl who brought you in just a moment ago, probably made it."

"...Made it?"

"Yeah, with her quirk, Creation."

"...Her what?"

Deku narrowed his eyes and furrowed his brows. From the frozen smile on the blond's face, this was not where either of them expected this conversation to go. Wonderful.

"Uh. Hm. Well, so um... quirks are..."

-

"...yeah that pretty much sums it up."

"...So... everyone has this kind of... quirk? And it can be anything from creating things out of nothing to having animal characteristics?" Deku asked, trying to understand the flimsy explanation that Taishiro tossed his way. The blond nodded, wincing at the broad recap. To think that his seven minute of drawn-out explanation would be tossed back in his face like this.

"The more you meet other people, I think the easier it will be to understand," he said. Lecturing was not his strong suit, perhaps he should have called someone else to help explain.

"...I see," Deku nodded back, "It must have been hard."

"Ah, it was at first," the blond agreed. "When the monsters started coming down, no one had their quirks. Suddenly stripped of what made us, well, us, it was… pretty awful."

Deku lifted his mug to his lips, pausing briefly as the words sunk in and he took a sip anyways.

"But it got better afterwards. It was a little confusing and a lot of people died, but it wasn’t like we were hopeless. Our quirks became back, and we found each other," the blond continued, his grin growing. "And I ended up here! Actually, my anniversary since coming here just passed."

"...Happy anniversary," Deku said, dipping his head.

"Ah, it's a little strange to hear that from you," Taishiro said, rubbing the back of his head. "Since you were the one that found me, all those years ago. Man, I can't believe it's already been like four years."

Deku choked on air. "It's been four years?" he asked, his shock palpable.

"Ah, yeah, about so," he said. "Something wrong?"

"It's been four years? As in, I have... been on this base as some sort of leadership-figure for four years? Me? Were there… Was there anyone before me?" the young man asked, his eyes bright and almost livid. His throat constricted, clearly unused to being used. What had he been doing? Maybe there was someone else before him. Maybe this was a recent thing.

Taishiro leaned back, as though he didn't understand and he couldn't begin to comprehend why the young man was so upset. “As far as I know, you made this place bottom-up.”

"Four years, and this was the best I could do?"

His smile wiped clean off his face, Deku wondered if this was how Taishiro actually looked. Did he put up a guise so that Deku's heart would be soothed? It worked wonders, because Deku felt like he had somehow let this man down. He couldn't remember this man's name or quirk or anything, but he could feel the disappointment.

He dropped his gaze, and dipped his head forward. He needed... He needed to amend this. Yes. That was the next course of action. He shouldn’t have spoken out like that, not to someone who brought him a warm cup of hot chocolate and was patient enough to explain these special [quirks].

(and it was telling if he didn’t tell Deku what his supposed quirk was.)

"... Please excuse my outburst-"

"No," Taishiro said, standing up. His eyes narrowed and his hands balled into fists, and his voice tore through the air between them, "There's nothing to excuse you about. The best you could do? I know that you lost all your memories, but what we do have is nothing to scoff out. I won't let you talk bad about yourself! Don't dismiss the hard work you, we, put into this place!"

"Hard work without results is wasted time," Deku replied back, just as fierce. A fire was being stoked, something triggered by the words Taishiro said. The frustrations he didn't know he had tumbled out. "Or is it different here because it's easier to stomach?"

The cold of the world faded. The sweetness of the chocolate was artificial. The heat being indoors with a hot drink was temporary. The tension in the room was thick enough to cut. Green eyes stared up at the adult in front of him. Somehow, it felt like this was something he always did.

"...Is that... truly what you think?" Taishiro asked, a whisper as small as his hopes.

Deku placed his head into his hands, feeling as though his head was far too tight and his brain was beating against the constriction. He couldn't help but think that he was right about to remember something, but it made his stomach flip inside-out instead.

A hand came to help him hold his mug, and the huge blond was kneeling in front of him. He didn’t even hear him move. Even kneeling, the man easily towered over him. To be at eye-level, he had to hunch his back substantially.

"...Sorry about that, I know that you were pretty badly injured. I don’t want you to strain yourself,” he said, dipping his head, before he looked back up. His eyes were hardened by his determination, “I... I can't agree with what you're saying, but that's not important right now. I don't really know how you view the world and stuff but for me, this place is everything. There's lots that could be better, yeah, but we came a long way too. Making something better comes after having something at all."

His hand was huge, making the mug look like a teacup in his grasp. He engulfed the cup and Deku's entire hand with ease, but there was nothing warmer than the smile that had returned to his face.

"But me, and I'm pretty sure everyone here, we're happy. That's not a waste. All this time, all the hardships, but we're happy."

The feeling in his heart was quickly replaced by something that he didn't remember the name of. It pressed down on his chest tightly, and his ribcage couldn't expand more so he could breathe.

"I don't know what kind of results you were thinking, but that's the most important one to me."

But if (when) he remembered, Deku would be sure to let him know.

"Fat-san! We need some help out here!" a muffled voice came from outside.

"Eh?" the blond looked up. "Uh," he looked to Deku and sheepishly rubbed the back of his head, "Do you mind if I step out for a moment?"

The young man blinked, surprised at the question and shook his head.

"Sorry about this," he said, bowing his head as he got up. The young man honestly didn't know if he was bowing to apologize to him or if he was trying to stay at eye-level while standing up.

"Fat-san!? Are you here?!"

"I'm coming!" he hollered back.

Deku took a slow sip of his hot chocolate, keeping watchful eyes on the huge blond.

"Please excuse me," the blond said. He straightened and gave a proper bow, going down to his waist, and then ran out.

From the frantic look in his eyes that kept going to the door, it was clear that this was a habit. It was a habit that, even though he was being called for some sort of emergency, he bowed to Deku first.

No way, Deku thought, feeling a dread pool at the pit of his stomach.

...Was he actually a leader here? Like a real, 'give orders and is respected' kind of leader? The thought made his heart race. A leader for four years and someone that could give that blond a reason to smile like that? It wasn't just that he was a leader here, but that he was important.

Why did that scare him so much?

### **6. Do you remember [Aizawa]**

The fastest way to test this theory would be to talk. Depending on the truth and validity of the statement, Deku figured that he was going to die at the end of the week for something he didn't remember doing or not. Or be framed so that something worse could happen. It didn’t matter which, since they all led to the same conclusion.

The first step to remembering anything was to survive long enough to have some ideas. Then, the first thing he needed to do was understand what his place here was.

...A leader? It felt wrong.

He finished his hot chocolate, watching the fire as he lost time to his thoughts. Momo had returned swiftly, with some winter shoes and some blankets if he wanted to return outside. Just as fast, she left, leaving Midoriya before he could get another word in.

It would appear that his words haunted her.

The room he was in was silent and devoid of any life outside of him. The others that he saw earlier must have left Still, he could hear the unmistakable sound of laughter and run on the outside. He wondered if there were monsters outside. Or perhaps, it had been a long time since they last saw one. The peace that was here almost felt surreal, in comparison to the shadows that danced Taishiro’s face when they were talking earlier.

Regardless, it looked like everyone was busy. He should go out to help as soon as he can. The restless energy was starting to build from his bones.

He slowly slipped a pair of socks on, eyes landing on misshapen scars that littered his feet. They looked like someone tried to surgically melt two different feet together into his misshapen one, but he supposed that he should be glad that he could walk at all. Pulling his feet up to his thigh, one at a time to get his socks pulled on, the stitches by his thigh and sides started to ache. He tried to take deep breaths and force through the pain but ultimately finished the job. He took a moment to catch his breath.

Putting socks on shouldn’t be this difficult. Maybe he should just abandon socks altogether…?

"Oh? Someone's here?"

Deku looked up as the sound of calm footsteps came closer. At the same time, he found a man with long black hair, a pair of red eyes widened at the sight of him.

He knew this man. His heart trembled at the sight of him.

“...Deku,” the man said, in a voice so familiar to him that he felt his heart clench. “You’re up.” His voice was bland, almost curt. At the same time, Deku didn’t think that he would have said anything if he didn’t want to; it just wouldn’t be efficient.

So, if it would interrupt him from whatever it was that he was doing (he had a shovel in his hand), then he wouldn’t do it. Anything more than that will be a waste of energy.

But, if Deku was a leader-if he was really a leader-

“Put my shoes on for me,” Deku said, certain in a way that felt unfamiliar to him.

Red eyes stared at him a little longer, just about to prove Deku one way or another, before he gave a long-suffering sigh instead.

“I was told that you forgot. Did you forget how to do this, too?” he asked, tired and exasperated but getting down on one knee in front of him. He placed his shovel to his side, slightly behind him.

He grabbed Deku’s hand and placed it on his shoulder so he could balance himself even though he was sitting down. Then, he loosened up the shoes so that Deku could slide them on with minimal obstructions. He didn’t flinch when he saw the scars, and his long fingers were uncomfortably hot against his skin and bones.

“...You, do you even know my name?” he asked. Red eyes rose to Deku’s face, and when he didn’t get an answer, sighed. “Asking a stranger to tie your shoes,” he murmured with a crooked grin on his lips.

He lifted his foot up and onto his knee, and Deku marveled at how an unrefined looking man could have such a gentle touch. It almost felt like this kindness was being wasted on him. He watched as pianist fingers made quick work of the shoelaces, and went as far as double-knotting them. After he finished, he rested his hand on his laces for another moment.

“You call me Shota.”

For a man who acted so aloof and distant, he abided without any complaints.

He tied the laces a little tighter than Deku would have preferred, but he supposed it was because he didn’t do this for him often. He moved on to his other shoe without hesitation. This wasn’t something that he normally asked for then. His movements might be certain, but they were slow and they weren't tailored. Then, why did he do it? Was it because he was bored? Was it because Deku told him to?

Shota placed his feet back down when he was finished and still kneeling in front of him, looked up to the young man.

“Is that good?” he asked, voice quiet like he was talking to a frightened creature, “Too tight? Too loose?”

“Yes, this is good,” Deku nodded, “Thank you, Shota.”

Shota’s hand grabbed Deku’s from his shoulder and held it to his chest like how someone might clutch their last memento of a loved one. His eyes, however, remained on his shoes for a moment longer.

“...Normally, you tape your shoelaces down,” the man said, more to his feet than him. “And you would never allow someone to be this close to you.” His eyes dragged up to his face, the bags under his eyes looking even darker with the lights cutting across his face at this angle. He lifted Deku’s hand to his stubbled face and placed his cheek against the scarred flesh of Deku’s palm.

The hand was warm. The stubble itched. It was comfortable. It made Deku think he was safe, and that he had a home here.

That feeling opened a pit in his gut, and fear reached cold fingers around his neck. The thought of comfort was unexpectedly frightening.

If he was a leader, shouldn’t this be normal? It almost sounded like he was some distant star to them, that they looked to guide them through the nights, while he didn’t even notice their existence. From what he heard, and how people reacted to his words, he was beginning to have the pieces that led to a very lonely conclusion.

“Exposing yourself to things that you spend a lot of time with, or going to places that you frequented will help you remember,” Shota said. “I’m sure you thought something like that, right?”

The young man didn’t react outwardly. It didn’t feel like the older man was looking for an answer. The heat of another person made him surprisingly cold. He continued in a voice so quiet that it could have been buried by snowfall.

“Do you remember anything from this?”

Deku tugged on his hand and was released. He was uncomfortable, not with the proximity of the older man, but of himself. His hand was scarred to hell for a reason, and against Shota’s hand like so, it was even more obvious. While the older man had some scars on him, his hands were calloused and rough but whole. There were bumps and divots in Deku’s, as though he had lost chunks of his flesh. Deku had no doubts that he deserved all that had happened to him.

Shota stared for a moment longer before he stood up. He tilted his head down to continue staring at Deku. From the expression on his face, twisting into something bitter but fond, he wondered what he was thinking about, or who he was remembering. Was it a leader? Was it someone that made him smile and beam with pride? Was it someone that could be returned?

“So, anything else you want me to do for you?” Shota asked. “Get you back to the infirmary? Find you some food? Entertain you?”

He tilted his head to the side, considering the options. The words and listing didn’t sound bitter despite their sarcastic delivery, as though this was something that Shota would do, given the command. “I would like to take a walk around outside,” Deku said, “Could you take me to a place I frequent often?”

The man stared at him for a long moment, and Deku wondered what was wrong.

“...Of course,” Shota said, pulling his gaze away. “Consider it done.”

They prepared properly for the cold breeze outside. Padded with a matching set of gloves, mitten, and a hat, bright yellow with small green stripes, they made their way out. The blanket that he had over his lap came around his shoulders, and he clutched onto it at the front. Shota walked slowly, almost lazily, but the second that Deku took an unsteady step, there was an arm wrapped around his waist and supporting him carefully.

“Be careful,” he warned his voice right above his ear, echoing in his chest like a rumble of thunder. He straightened back up and released him when he was certain that Deku was steady. “Or else I might not let go next time.”

Red eyes stared at him for another moment before he stepped back. His features didn't even twitch.

“C’mon, I’ll take you to the gardens.”

Whatever Deku’s position was on this base, he wasn’t sure if Leader was the right word for it.

### **7. I Promise I'll be back [Kouta]**

Deku looked slowly around the base, Shota slowing his strides to match his distracted ones.

Without the fear of freezing this time, he took the opportunity to slowly take in other aspects of the base. The winter skies above were a thick gray, blanketed the skies the same way there was about a foot of snow blanketing the ground. His breath fogged in front of him before dissipating upwards like smoke.

Bundled up, he still felt cold and weary.

The cold permeated through his clothing and spread through his body like a slow-acting poison. Standing, losing feeling in his nose and feeling his muscles tense from the pain lacing through each breath he had, this felt right. This felt normal. He wasn't sure what that spelled out for him, but he could feel something in nothing.

“Ah, it’s snowing so you won’t really be able to see them,” Shota said, “But we have some flower beds and one of our vegetable gardens over here. You spend more time with the flowers in the parking lot than anywhere else though. However, these are the first flower beds you put together.”

His eyes widened at the sight of the batch of untouched snow in front of him.

“Yeah, they’re all frozen, but,” next to him, the man motioned forward, to where there was a patch of ground with a thin layer of snow. Aside from some paths that were clearly shoveled out, there were heaping amounts of snow otherwise. So, seeing the thin layer of snow over the ground indicated that someone was still looking after them. “That’s them.”

Deku nodded back. It felt familiar. Everything here felt nauseatingly familiar. His headache came to the forefront of his mind, throbbing.

"Deku?"

The sound of a child brought him back to the present. His eyes found the small figure of a child that came up to his waist.

Deku felt light and defenseless, was he someone who needed a weapon? He couldn’t help but think that he needed to have a weapon, but nothing came to mind.

Everyone he has met was definitely armed in some way, from a small knife to a firearm, but nothing prepared him for the sight of a little boy with a small handgun scraped to his size. Deku wasn't surprised at the fact that a child that barely came to his waist had a gun. He was surprised that he wasn't surprised. It spelled out for him, at once, what kind of life they must all live here.

"I… I heard that you got injured again," the small boy said. "And it made your memories fuzzy. But I…" he shifted back and forth on his feet. He took a deep breath, balled his hands into fists, and proudly proclaimed, "So I'll make sure to protect this place while you're healing!"

He nodded, satisfied with himself, and almost missed Deku’s answer.

Among the falling snow, feeling as though he was standing under falling ash, Deku’s headache faded away momentarily.

"I'll be counting on you,” he said, feeling the words before he knew what he was saying, “I’ll be joining you soon, Kouta."

And it was like Deku had promised him the whole world. Kouta, the young boy in front of him, grinned, big and wide and proud. He meant what he said. They both did. From that small instant, he felt something return to him.

Kouta was a young boy that joined them. They shared the same apartment space, and were something like roommates. Deku knew that he deserved a crime worse than death for forcing Kouta to become a child soldier, and that's where the concrete memories fade and that wave of guilt returned right under his chin.

“O-osu!” Kouta agreed, bright eyed and proud. “I-I gotta go back to training,” he chirped.

Deku nodded back. “Don’t overwork yourself,” he said.

The young man nodded. He turned to Shota, “Bye Aizawa-san,” and left.

Deku stared at his guide, “...Not Shota?”

“My full name is Aizawa Shota,” the man said easily, “You remember the kid unprovoked but you still struggle with my name, huh?”

Green eyes fell to the ground.

“You feel familiar,” the young man spoke quietly, his voice as soft as the freshly-fallen snow, “I… Not in,” he motioned to his throat, “not this.”

“...You don’t want to talk?” Shota, Aizawa, said. “You’re a pretty quiet person.”

No, that assessment was wrong. But Deku couldn’t find the words.

“You are familiar,” he repeated. He placed his hand over his chest, right where his heart continued to beat, and turned to give the taller man a small smile. “Trustworthy.”

Aizawa stared at him for a long moment, red eyes wide. He gave a long sigh as he turned his eyes away.

“...I see.”

The warmth that could be found in the middle of snowfall was a patient thing. Deku could only hope that the rest of his memories came back so that he knew what the name of this feeling was.

### **8. Sunset - [Hawks]**

“The next place you go often is the roof,” Aizawa explained to him, his breath coming out in smoke in front of his lips, “But I don’t think it’s a good idea for you to go since you’re injured.”

“No problem about that,” a voice from above called out.

A few feathers, the same shade of crimson streaking the evening sun, fell to the ground around them, somehow slower than the snow around it. A blond with red wings stretched out as though to hold the sinking sun dropped down next to them.

“Besides,” the blond flashed a grin at Aizawa, “You’re going on patrol tonight, right?”

Apocalypse, Deku reminded himself, but his teeth were as white as the snow.

Next to him, Aizawa worked his jaw. He looked at the blond, eyes narrowed before he closed them. A sigh ripped through his mouth, and heaved his chest. “...I’ll leave him to you then, Hawks.”

The blond's smile didn't even twitch, as though everything was falling perfectly into place for him.

Aizawa looked back at Deku, catching the young man's attention.

“I don’t know if anyone’s told you,” he said, “But it’s okay to forget things.” His words were gentle, but his eyes were sharp.

The young man furrowed his brows in response, but the taller man left quickly afterwards. His words echoed in his head, bouncing around without any real sustenance. It was important but he couldn’t make any more sense of it.

Forget? Did he mean that he shouldn’t bother with his memories? Well, if some of his memories didn’t return, then they didn’t return. It would be problematic, especially given the circumstances of their life, but it wasn’t like he could do anything about it. He had that inkling feeling that, if there was a convenient quirk that could fix his memories, they would have used it by now.

Or, there was something that they didn't want him to remember.

“Hey there, Deku.”

His focus returned to the man called Hawks in front of him. Was it possible for someone to be so handsome after the world ended?

He gave a curt bow, barely moving his shoulders.

“...So,” the blond said, hands in pockets as his eyes rested on Deku, “The rooftop, right? We can take the stairs, or I could,” he wiggled his wings, “take you there.”

Deku didn't hesitate.

“Stairs.”

The blond laughed, as though there was something particularly funny about what he said. Maybe it was the way he said it. Still, he didn’t think that forgetting this man and his handsome laugh was a good thing.

Perhaps it had to do with what Natsuo mentioned earlier, about some people taking advantage of him. What did that entail? Who could it be? He thought it would be the blonds that came bouncing in, Toga and Twice, but he didn’t feel an ounce of discomfort from them even though it was clear that both Natsuo and Shouto were uncomfortable. Shouldn’t he remember then? It wasn't like anyone was telling him who to be careful of.

Because right now, he had yet to meet anyone that made him feel off or unwanted. A little strange, but that could be chalked up to the fact that he felt complicated and unnamed emotions. Perhaps one of them was suspicion. Or something.

The blond motioned to the side. “This way,” he said. Deku stepped up next to him, ignorant to the way Hawks' was staring at him. “So, you’ve been up and about?”

He nodded.

“And you lost your memories, right?”

He nodded again. The blond nodded along, his lazy smile still on his face like they were talking about the weather. He gave a little hum before he continued speaking.

“So, are you heading to the rooftop to try and jump-start them?” he asked.

Deku nodded again. His eyes trailed to Hawks’ figure, his relaxed posture, the slight drawl, the way their eyes met for a brief second before the blond tore his gaze away. He wondered.

“Yes,” he replied back. “I was told I spent some time there.”

“You do,” Hawks said quietly, “You spend a lot of time there.”

The smile that stretched across the blond's face was heavy, like he didn’t know how to cry so he smiled instead. The sight of it made Deku’s heart squeeze tightly, but before he could find the words to ask, the blond continued.

“Well, you’ve been walking around for a bit, you got any questions? Aizawa-san isn’t really one for socializing, so I bet he didn’t really offer. What do you wanna know? Your favorite color? My favorite food?”

If two people are familiar with each other, and they were close enough to confide anything and everything to each other, would that disappear because one forgot the friendship? Deku, who couldn’t put a name to the expression on this man’s face, thought so. Maybe, if he remembered their friendship, they could rekindle it. Something like that.

“...What are patrols?” he asked.

The blond stared for a moment, before his smile hitched back up on his face. Was he hiding something? Was he grateful for the change of topic? Deku couldn't tell.

“Uh, pretty much, a few of us group up and take a lap around the area. It’s good exercise and gives us a chance to blow off some steam. It’s just a security measure, checking for monsters and traps and stuff.”

Deku absorbed the knowledge. “...Are there any written reports?”

He must have said something funny because Hawks’ lips twitched at the corners of his mouth.

“Of course,” he said. “I just returned from the afternoon patrol. But I think Sakamata-san is writing up our report. I’ll go introduce you later. Ah, I said ‘afternoon patrol’ but we’re a pretty free-willed group. People form groups to head out anytime they want really. At minimum, two patrol reports are logged for every day. One in the night and one in the day. Sometimes, we have groups of eight, and seven of those patrols out and about too. It really depends.”

Their silence was accented by their footsteps before Deku spoke up again.

“...Isn’t that bad for security?”

This time, Hawks barked out a laugh. “Yeah, it really is, isn’t it?”

And for a brief second, Deku wondered if this man had a few loose screws in his head. He figured that the apocalypse would do that to a person, but it was still concerning. Perhaps that’s why Mirio smiled so brightly. But if that was the case, what did that say about Deku, the supposed leader here?

They finally approached the staircase when Hawks suddenly stopped to extend his hand out to Deku.

“Hey, it's slippery so watch your step…” he looked at his hand and then back to Deku. He must have done this out of habit, but now realized who he had done this too. His confident grin turned sheepish, but before he could move his hand away, Deku placed his on top of his.

The movement felt natural, but the hold didn’t. But the smile that bloomed on Hawks’ face looked more natural and wholehearted than anything else he’s seen on this man’s face. Until he saw him smile like this, Deku would have never thought his earlier smile were forlorn.

Deku adjusted his grip so that their palms lined up, and their fingers were interlocking instead. There was nothing familiar about the motion or the feel, and he reached a conclusion instantly.

Deku didn't ever hold this man's (or probably anyone's) hand.

The hold felt foreign, but it made its home in his heart instantly. Glove in glove, he felt something return to him. This must have been something he wanted to do for a long time.

“I… You remind me of someone,” Deku said quietly. In his memory, the distant and foggy thing it was, he swore that there was something familiar about this whole thing. “I… I’ve wanted to do this for a long time, didn’t I?” he asked.

Hawks reminded him of someone who laughed like freedom. It was someone that Deku shackled down to the ground, and anchored him here. Someone who was honest with him in the most roundabout ways. His other hand came to his forehead as he tried to remember. It was right there, between his throbbing temples.

It was…

“Keigo."

He squinted at their hands, his head pulsating as he remembered. Right as he said that name, he felt something clear up. His hand dropped from his head.

“His name was Keigo.”

He looked up to see the shocked expression on Hawks’ face. The man stared at him before a rosy blush came up to his cheeks and he gave a small smile.

“...My name,” he said quietly, “is Keigo. People here just call me ‘Hawks’ since that was my Hero-Name, the name I was known by, before all of this happened,” he explained quietly. His hand tightened around Deku’s as he stepped closer to him. He was taller than him, but he dropped his head so that their foreheads could touch even though it must have been uncomfortable on his neck and back. “But you… I’m your Keigo,” he said quietly.

Deku didn’t think he was lying. This felt like the truth. It almost felt like something that was previously a curious question had been answered. And yet, he felt so incredibly sad.

“...Good evening, Keigo,” Deku said quietly, closing his eyes in an attempt to stop himself from crying.

“Yeah… Good indeed,” the blond said. His bottom lip trembled and his wings curled outwards to cocoon around Deku’s body, as though to hide them from the world. An arm wrapped around his waist, pulling him even closer to the older man, and without much extra thought, he returned the gesture the best he could, despite how awkward it felt. “...Thank you for remembering.”

The way Hawks spoke… It almost sounded like his prayers had been granted. How could he have provided this much relief for this man, and believe that there were things that he should forget? Perhaps, the next time he met Aizawa, he could get an answer.

“I’ll take you there,” Hawks said, “ready?”

Deku nodded, feeling as though he couldn’t refuse this man anything.

Within a few moments, they were flying just above the rooftop. Deku’s eyes found the horizon as the sun sank into it. The stretch of last light illuminated and reflected off the snow around them, and dyed the world in the vibrant colors. The wind, a little stronger and colder than when they were on the ground, came, but Deku didn’t even notice with Hawks’ wings wrapped around him, and his laughter echoing between feathers.

Stretches of vermillion crossed his face, amber lights dancing across the curves of his cheeks, and coupled with his golden locks, Hawks looked radiant. Deku stared, eyes wide, and wondered why he would ever want to forget such a happy look on that ridiculously handsome face.

### **9. Figuring - [Dabi]**

Returning down, Deku turned to Hawks, breathless and amazed.

“That was amazing,” he whispered.

“...Yeah?” the blond grinned, “I’ll do it anytime. You just have to say the word.”

The words echoed in his head. [ Say the word. ]

Like an order?

The thought sank deeply into his heart. He nodded back.

“Where else do I spend my time?” he asked.

“Ah, probably the Rental Office,” the blond said, “I’ll take you there. And I can introduce you to people as we see them. It looks like you’re already starting to remember anyways.”

“You… want me to remember?”

Some things were fuzzy, like he was looking through dirty glass. And his head hurt, like he tried to break the glass with his forehead or something.

“...I think there are some parts that you’re okay not remembering,” Hawks replied back, the grin on his face sobering into something a little painful. “But I can’t help but feel a little happy, you know?” This time, the grin was boyish in charm and radiant like stars, and Deku wondered who the Hawks who smiled so sadly just before was. “You remembered my name.”

Yes, Deku thought, which meant that he was on the track to remembering after all. Things were returning to him, bit by bit. That meant he was one step closer to expelling the heavy weight on his chest, right?

A flash of movement caught his eye, and Deku stopped.

“Ah, Deku?” Hawks turned back around, but Deku was already making his way down the hallway. His eyes found what Deku had been staring at, and his good mood vaporized away. “Oi, wait, Deku-”

His hand shot out and grabbed the young man’s wrist. His grip, in his panic, must have been too firm, and Deku gave a sharp cry. Hawks yanked his hand off of him like he had touched fire, and jerked backwards, eyes wide. His feathers fluttered wildly behind him.

“S-Sorry,” he said, choking on his words and his guilt.

Deku nodded, the pain didn’t fade but it was manageable after a second. Next to him, the blond stepped closer to him, and Deku took a step back. The expression on his face made the earlier guy with an easy grin look like a stranger.

“I didn’t mean to hurt you. Do you… If you…” The words tumbled out of his mouth like he couldn’t control them, but eventually, he managed to string together a sentence. “I can escort you back to the infirmary.” He spoke firmly, but he couldn’t control the wild panic in his eyes.

Deku looked backwards to what had caught his eye, when his gaze was suddenly obscured by a large red wing. His eyes dragged back to Hawks and the pinched expression on his face.

“You… Are the type of guy that always did what he wanted to do,” Hawks informed him quietly. “And I know that it’s futile to try and stop you,” he took a step back when Deku turned back to him. Without the smile hanging on his face, his face contorted with bitter regrets. “But, I’m begging you to be careful,” he said, eyebrows furrowed in his sincerity. “Not everyone here has good intentions.”

“When you wrapped your wings around me,” Deku whispered. He placed his hand near the wing next to him, not touching it, but hovering right over the feathers. “They felt incredibly warm.” His hand came over his chest, right where his heart thundered under his breastbone at the memory as the world was dyed in Hawks’ colors. “And I felt courage.”

Hawks eyes were wide, and Deku took a step back, just out of reach.

“But it wasn’t familiar. Before this, we didn’t do this, did we?”

The blond took another step forward and Deku one more step back. His face contorted, as though catching his mistake and wary green eyes met his.

“Indeed, not everyone here has good intentions.”

Still, the expression on Hawks’ face was painful to look at. Deku wondered if it was possible to like someone that you didn’t trust. If it was possible, he knew that he had found an answer here.

“Excuse me.”

Deku turned around, his eyes trailing after what he had found. He rushed after him, not hearing anything behind him, and when he turned the corner, he met eyes with someone that made him feel like his heart was breaking.

“To think that I’d live to see the day that you’d run after me,” a tall man said, his scars stretching to accommodate the painful looking grin on his face. “Deku.”

His jaw slowly unhinged, green eyes wide as he looked up at the man. For some reason, his gut churned at the sight of his cold grin, and had no doubts.

Green eyes peered up at him, and the words came tumbling out. “When I saw you, it felt wrong that you were alone..” He reached out for the man, stopping just shy of touching his arm, “...Who are you?”

“You called me Dabi.”

His tone didn’t fluctuate. He spoke clearly and certainly, like a report. There was no change in his facial features, and summer blue eyes stared at him in a bored-like manner. His eyes flitted down to Deku’s hand, and leaned away from the touch.

But Deku felt it in his heart, this man was accusing him of something. He was angry or upset, he wasn’t sure which but it was one of the two. It wasn’t something that he could tell just by looking at his blank expression, but just a feeling that Deku had. At once, it brought a fledgling piece of hope to bloom in his chest. This was it.

This was someone who didn’t listen to anyone. Then, how he reacted to an [unreasonable] demand would be telling.

“...Give me your fingernail,” Deku said, curious to see how far he could push this.

Was he a leader? Or a tyrant? A scapegoat? He didn’t know, but these little experiments of his were teaching him things that only brought him more questions. This would be one answer more than he had before.

Dabi’s eyes flitted up to his face and then back down. With an annoyed sigh, he reached into his pocket and whipped out a small folding knife.

“Does it matter which one?” he asked, putting the tip of the blade under the ring finger nail of his left hand.

Deku’s hand shot out to grab his hand, his heart in his throat. Why didn’t he stop? Why didn’t he question it? He barely hesitated. The innumerable questions and confusion flooded Deku’s head, but failed to appear on his tongue.

“...Thought you wanted my nail,” Dabi said, voice like velvet.

“You … didn’t even hesitate,” Deku said quietly, too shocked to hide his thoughts.

“If you are asking for it, it’s important,” the man replied back, casual and nonchalant like this was a normal occurrence. “Did you have a preference or something?”

“I didn’t mean it,” Deku said, the words tumbling from his mouth like a leaky faucet, “I’m sorry, it was wrong of me to do so-”

Dabi’s other hand shot out to grab his chin and forced the young man to look up at him. His eyes, cold and blue like the frozen tips of a mountain, threatened to freeze Deku’s heart in that second. Perhaps his quirk related to ice-like abilities, since the temperature between them plunged into sub-zero. Still, his composure finally cracked from what it was before.

“Don’t ever apologize to me,” he said, voice cold.

“...Is that what you have a problem with?”

Dabi released him, yanked his other hand out of Deku’s limp grip, and pocketed the knife. His coat moved back, giving Deku a clear view of the handgun holster on his belt with several magazine pouches on his vest underneath. He relaxed, leaning backwards and focusing his stare on Deku with a frown.

“...Hm, is it that hard to believe that I’d do this for you?” he asked. He tilted his head as he contemplated his own question in a mocking way. “You know, it’ll be easier to find what I wouldn’t do for you.”

“Then, what wouldn’t you do for me?”

Dabi’s smile returned, all teeth and no humor.

“Hm,” he gave a pregnant pause, the sound reverberating from his chest as his grin stretched, “I think you’ve asked plenty of questions, so I can field a few insead,” he said, tapping his chin mockingly. “Now, why don’t you want my fingernail anymore?” he asked.

Their breaths formed in front of their mouths, dissipating just as fast. The snowflakes that fell seemed to be the only reminder for them that time was moving.

“...I didn’t want to see you hurt,” Deku admitted.

A sardonic smirk twisted onto the older man’s face, as he scoffed back. Despite how mocking it looked, he looked far too bitter for Deku to think that it was directed at him.

“Is that you feel now, or what you remember?” Dabi asked.

“Does it matter?” Deku asked, tilting his head to the side. “That’s how I feel right now. That’s what I remember feeling before. It doesn’t feel wrong, and it doesn’t feel foreign.” He placed his hand over his chest and balled his shirt under his hand.

Dabi chuckled at something that Deku didn’t know about.

“Your answer,”’ he said, tilting his head to the side, “did you get it?”

Deku nodded, a little more certain because he had an answer and now he had to go find his question. He figured something out, memory or not.

“Thank you, Dabi,” he said, never one to forget his manners.

The tall man dropped his hand onto the top of his head, crushing his curls and touseling them. The touch was impossibly warm, his hand encompassing the entire top of his head with ease, and Deku felt like the rest of his body turned colder. He leaned into the touch, closing his eyes at the comfortable feeling, and missed the smile that graced Dabi’s lips.

“Yeah, let’s get out of the snow. It’s miserable out here.”

### **10. I'll Miss You - [Shigaraki]**

Deku and Dabi made about two steps into the building when Deku sneezed.

The sound was embarrassingly loud, and more than embarrassing, it was such a shock to his system that his steps faltered and he nearly fell to the side. His arms wrapped around himself, and he gave a full body shiver. Sneezing should not be enough to knock him off his feet, but here he was. All of his organs felt lie they were rattling inside of his chest.

“Hey, easy,” a low murmur came above him, and a pair of hands came to help support him. His body trembled under warm hands, feeling as though his body was crumpling under the warmth like how fire crumples paper. “...Sorry, looks like I shouldn’t have kept you out in the cold.”

Deku shook his head. He felt the pain subside to manageable levels, and managed to stabilize himself back onto his feet. The world turned around him and he suppressed a shiver. Now that he was sheltered from the snow and the biting breeze, he understood how cold he was.

“I’m alright, sorry about that,” he said, straightening. He raised a hand to his head, as though it was too heavy for his neck to support alone.

“Yeah, I’m taking you back to the infirmary,” the clipped reply came back. Dabi looked at his hands and then back to Deku. “You-”

His voice suddenly stopped and he straightened up. Eyes narrowed and back tensing, Dabi let out a soft huff, as though the situation was so bad that he couldn’t help but laugh. He wasn’t sure if this was a reflex or habit, but he even went as far as to step in front of Deku. His hands opened in front of Deku, so warm that he could feel the warmth from where he was standing.

Blue fire, briefly, scattered across his fingers. Was that his quirk? Blue fire? Before Deku could mention anything, he looked up to see that the blue of the fires matched the blue of his eyes.

And Dabi's eyes were focused on something further into the hall, and Deku felt as though someone was prying his head open.

“Don’t get your panties in a twist. He’s alive, ain’t he?” the fire-user (and did it even make sense for a fire-user like Dabi to be so cold?) said, sounding exactly the same as he did just a moment before but the displeasure was clear on his face.

“Hostile, aren’t we?” Another man came out. He moved slowly, but there was a bit of danger in his movement, like a big cat observing its prey. “No need for that. You’re not the only one that missed our dearest Deku.”

With hair a few shades lighter than Dabi’s eyes, nearly translucent under fluorescent lights, a thin man stepped out. In a casual black hoodie and worn jeans, his lips stretched up into an unfriendly smile. A scar ran down the side of his lips, adding to the air of danger around him.

At the sight of a cruel-looking man, however, Deku found peace.

“Shigaraki,” Dabi said, spitting the word out of his mouth like it tasted disgusting. “Aren’t you going on patrol?”

“Nah, I’m not feeling it,” he said, waving his hand. It was like everyone here had mastered the ‘look lazy in the most dangerous way possible’ while Deku could take himself out by sneezing too hard. Maybe it was something that he had to remember how to do? “More importantly, shouldn’t you be letting our Dear Leader rest?”

"Hm. I guess," he said, shrugging his shoulders to show his nonchalant attitude. His lips curled up into something that had too much teeth to be considered a smile, "Even you could help by fucking off. What do you think?"

Deku's head snapped up, but neither men were looking at him. For a moment, the air between them seemed to crackle with their aggression, waiting for the other person to move. Was this normal? He didn’t know. He couldn’t get a read on it. He felt confused, like it was strange to see these two hissing at each other.

He peered at them for a moment, silent and wide-eyed. And then, when he took a step, both men’s eyes landed on his face. For Deku, he figured that it meant that they were extremely paranoid, or they were attuned to what he was doing. Either way, the hostility in the room increased with his movement.

“Am I the Leader here?” he asked.

Both of them stared at him, a moment of silence stretching between them. The tension was replaced with confusion.

“Uh, yeah?” Dabi said.

“Did… No one told you?” Shigaraki asked.

“I didn’t believe it,” Deku replied back before they devolved into another hissing competition. He watched as the two shared a glance, and wondered how they could be so hostile one minute and act like they could read each other's thoughts in the next. “However, I was told to be careful of who I trusted though. By several people.”

“Oh?”

This clearly garnered their interest. The smiles that were introduced onto their faces looked much more bitter than what Deku felt used to. It should worry him that their smiles looked sharper than the knives they carried.

“Yeah,” he said, “I didn’t get any names.”

“They didn’t say anyone?” Dabi asked. “Well, they’re talking about Shigaraki.”

“Probably knew that he wasn’t going to listen,” Shigaraki replied back dryly. Red eyes narrowed to a degree as he eyed the taller man, “And we both know that it’s going to be a incohesive fuck like you, Dabi.”

“Eh?” the sound stretched into a drawl, “You almost sound jealous, you emotionally incompentent bastard. You learn that out of a game, too? Tell me, am I following the script correctly?”

“Who the fuck would be jealous of you, Patches? Shouldn’t you be working on training your quirk so you aren’t left behind again, you worthless side-quest?”

When suddenly, Deku laughed. It was a quiet sound, something that would have been easily ignored and easily forgotten under the growing waves of fight, but like snowfall, it caught their attention and silenced them immediately. In the moment however, the soft sound seemed to echo in the room, smoothering the fight out. In an instant, both men turned back to him.

“What’s so funny?” Shigaraki asked, his voice hard as he narrowed his eyes.

“I’m glad that you’re doing well,” Deku replied back, “I was worried that you’d be upset after the-” he cut himself off when an onslaught of vertigo came. The ground was suddenly up to his waist, while the ceiling seemed to drop to his shoulders, and it spun him around like a ballerina in a jewelry box.

His head started to throb again, and he brought his hand up to his head. He stumbled to the side, unable to find his balance on the ground that no longer felt steady. Just like that, two hands came for him. One that grabbed his wrist, and the other that pushed his shoulder to the wall. Deku tilted his head up, hitting the back of his head against the wall in an effort to look at the men.

In an instant, he remembered that they could kill him. If they did, it would be painful and possibly humiliating. The thought was frightening, but he felt at peace.

“...Let’s get him to a bed,” Dabi said. His hand moved from the small of his back to between his shoulder blades. “He’s running a fever.”

Shigaraki clicked his tongue, “Don’t drop him,” he said, stepping backwards. The hand that had just been holding his wrist released him, leaving him feeling colder.

“You’ve gotten gentler,” Deku murmured without thinking.

His head felt like it was a size too small, and it was squeezing his brain. If he wasn’t careful, maybe it’ll start dripping out of his nose. It sounded disgusting, but he’s seen it happen. Nothing concrete came to mind, but he could swear that once upon a time, he saw it.

When would he have ever seen something like that? When would he have seen something that gorey? Why was it easier to remember grievous injury, but he couldn’t remember the names of the people who reached out to support him when his own legs failed him?

“Don’t get used to it, or else you’ll miss it.” Long fingers pushed a few curls backwards, tucking them behind his ear even though it was too short to stay back.

This felt backwards. It felt contradictory.

“But I guess it would depend on your memory,” Shigaraki continued.

It felt lonely.

But lonely, Deku recognized. It was an empty feeling hollowing inside of him as the world grew darker. The people next to him? Company? Someone picking him up and cradling him to their chest? Again?

It was foreign.

Cradled in Dabi’s arm, his head against his shoulder as he took labored breaths, he wondered if the world would slow down just a little longer. This warm sensation may never return. Could he miss what he didn't remember? He wasn't certain, but he would miss what he had now. The heat of someone else was not something that he wanted to relinquish.

If he never remembered, he wondered if this sensation could be his forever.

### **11. Wait for Me - [Uraraka]**

[get up.]

Deku’s eyes snapped open, and jerked up. Cold sweat broke out across his face, and he was acutely aware that he was unarmed. His heart raced in his chest, nearly bruising his breastbone in its frantic pounding. Something clattered, but he couldn't hear it over his pulse.

“Deku?!”

He flinched, eyes landing at the person who called him and prepared himself to be attacked. Instead, there was a young brunette staring back at him. He blinked and slowly relaxed. As the tension ebbed away, his exhaustion and pain returned. His posture slouched and he fell back onto where he had just been sleeping on... a couch? He looked down, and indeed, a lumpy couch that has seen some better days but still, a couch. With a jacket as a blanket. He knew this jacket. Dabi was just wearing it.

...Did those two seriously pile him on a couch? He didn't think that they were humane enough to not just leave him on the ground like last time...

The last time that he didn't remember, but he was certain that it happened. There was a last time.

“S-Sorry, I didn’t mean to startle you!”

He looked at her for a moment, and shook his head. The entire situation had his lips curling up into a smile.

“I’m fine. You didn’t do anything wrong,” he said. He rubbed his temples, feeling as though he could fall asleep where he stood, and at the same time, strangely alert. A yawn ripped through his lips, and he rubbed his eyes as he turned to her. She was still staring at him. “Is there something wrong?”

She just kept staring at him, eyes wide and mouth ajar. Did he do something wrong? Was something wrong?

“Ah, I-I-I uh... I thought you might want another blanket,” she said, lifting the said blanket in her hands. Her cheeks were dyed a faint red, and Deku wondered if maybe she was cold- “Since you looked a little cold.”

“...No, I’m fine,” he said. She probably needed it more. “I want to move my body,” he explained, “Do you know if… if there’s a place I could…” he didn’t know how he wanted to word this.

“Work out? We got a training room and a gym,” she said, giving him the words he was looking for, “I can lead you there, if you want.”

He gave her a small smile and nodded, “Thank you…” His voice trailed when he realized he didn't have a name.

“Uraraka Ochaco,” she said proudly, “You usually call me Ochaco.”

“...I see, were we close?”

“Uh… I guess?” she said. “Hm, you normally keep to yourself, but we’re not unfamiliar.” And realizing how vague that must have sounded, her face flushed. “Ah, that is, that uh… that’s not really what I meant to say, I mean uh… Like, without talking, we have a good relationship. We wave at each other when we pass by and uhm, sometimes I come on to be your aerial support.” She tapped her chin, as though she was rattling them off as she remembered them.

So strictly speaking, they were on good business terms. She was reliable, and he relied on her. It was a simple relationship, and one that he could understand.

“...I see,” he nodded his head. “I don’t… remember much. I’m sorry.”

“No, not at all,” she said, shaking her head. “I mean, not that losing your memories isn’t a big deal or anything, I think that’s uhm… pretty bad, but uh… I don’t think it’s like, the worst thing ever, you know?”

He tilted his head back at her.

Almost shyly, she rubbed the back of her neck as she gave a nervous laugh. “Because like, uh...Usually, I feel like you’re the one that does all the work. And you were always the one that pulled everyone forward and helped and waited so that we were able to get back up on our feet.” The more she spoke, the more confident her words became. Driven by a determination that Deku didn’t recognize, she enclosed her hand into a fist and gave a wide grin. “So this time, I’ll wait for you, help you out, and get you back on your feet, too.”

“...And if I don’t remember?”

Uraraka laughed, “By then, we’ll already have some more memories, right?”

She was blinding.

That restlessness returned. He managed to scrounge up a smile for her, but he couldn’t help but think that her kindness was wasted on him. He placed his hand over his heart. From the shine in her eyes to her determination, everything about Uraraka filled him with inspiration.

A leader who doesn’t remember. Followers who wish to be his support, to the point where they think it’s a good thing that he doesn’t remember, while monsters roam outside.

Was it because she was young? Then, what about that cup of hot chocolate? Was it because he was kind?

“...You’re right,” he said, a loose smile on his face. “Do you mind guiding me to that gym?”

“Oh, of course, this way!”

He needed to remember quickly. That way, that smile and confidence would never be threatened. It was the least he could do for her. Somehow, that feeling embedded itself inside of him, making a home in his heart. The pain was momentary, but her smile might not be.

He didn’t even realize that she had a gun until she turned around. Indeed, there was a small handgun tucked into the back of her pants. He saw a glimpse of it under her jacket when it flailed out behind her as she turned too quickly to get to the door.

Combat was huge here. If he was as big of a part of the planning and the likes as they said, then he must have been a part of the fighting force as well. Hopefully, engaging in combat-or even moving his body- will help jog some memories.

He prayed that they would wait for him. If something were to happen to anyone while he was recuperating, because he couldn’t remember… Actually, if he didn’t remember someone, could he mourn them? The aching emptiness inside of him, was it because he had already lost something precious that he couldn’t remember? Then, he needed to remember. If, because of the things that he did, she could still smile and he could still be kind, then he needed to return to that.

He couldn’t afford to wait around.

### **12. Is it you? - [Stain]**

At the gym, however, Uraraka took a full step back from the doorframe when she realized who was inside.

Deku looked at her and then tried to look around her and into the room. She was one of the rare people that was his size, so it wasn't too hard.

“Ah… It looks like we came at a bad time, if Stain-san is here,” she said. Her hands dropped to her side in defeat, and she gnawed on her bottom lip before suggesting, “Maybe we could-”

“Deku?”

A tall man from the middle of the room called out to him. Everything, from his height to his strides, felt long and purposeful. There wasn’t an ounce of him that didn’t move or settle without reason. Looking at him, Deku had a hard time finding any weaknesses, despite how slowly he moved towards them. It could also be because of his eyes, observing him sharply with blood red eyes. The man’s face was flat, and even though it was a chilly winter day, wore a tight, sleeveless black shirt. It formed right onto his body, displaying sharp dips of muscles on his chest. With how long he was, it was like there was a stretch of shadow encroaching towards them.

The rest of the room was empty. It looked like a stereotypical martial arts dojo, with padded mats around majority of the room and walls. There were some training equipment, dumbbells and weight-equipment to the side, and an open area otherwise. The remaining walls and ceiling were stone-gray concrete, and the fluorescent lights above gave the whole room a bright gleam.

“Hello,” Deku nodded his head. “I didn’t realize someone was using this gym. I’ll come back-”

“You here to spar?” the shadowy man asked, as though no one spoke.

“...A spar,” Deku said slowly, rolling the word in his mouth as his brain found a definition, “sounds great.” He took his blanket off of his shoulders and placed it on the ground as he toed out of his sandals.

Uraraka gave a sharp inhale, and he turned back to her.

“Thank you for leading me here,” he said before he stepped into the gym. His eyes locked back with the long man. He didn’t feel threatened by any means, but he didn’t think it was a good thing to look away carelessly. He didn't feel threatened or like he was obligated, but there was something that pulled his gaze back to him.

Was he someone that watched shadows?

“Are-are you sure?” Uraraka asked quietly.

And although he didn’t know the name of the man, of this Stain, who seemed to be permanently hunched over, Deku did trust him. From the way the girl eyed Stain, her body tense like a snake coiled to strike, he could tell it wasn’t a shared sentiment.

“Yes. Thank you for your help.”

She gnawed on her lip, but Deku was certain about this. He wondered if the two had some history of the likes, and that was why she had some concerns. The thought that she was just worried about him didn’t even cross his mind. Hopefully, when his memories returned, he would be able to articulate why he found these strangers to be trustworthy when they clearly didn’t trust each other.

“Let’s get you warmed up first,” the long man said. He hesitated for a second before adding, “I heard you were on bedrest. Should you be here?”

Deku, used to how information seemed to travel, shrugged back. “I feel restless.”

The impassive expression broke when Stain snorted back, “Yeah, I’m not shocked.”

What did this man know about him? What did this man think of him, that his gaze would alternate between a sharp glare and a tender gaze? Was it this? Was it him? From the moment he came here, he felt like something had returned to him.

“I felt like something was missing,” Deku said, as the two circled each other on the mat. His heartrate kicked up. “But something’s different since I came here. Is it you? Is it this place?” he asked. “I want to find out.”

He didn’t answer, but that was fine. Everything else slowly faded away, and all Deku could focus on were those red, red, red eyes.

-

Warm ups were brutal. Were they supposed to be this hard? Deku swore he could feel his heart threatening to leave his chest. He took a swing from the water, spilling some of it down his mouth. His hand, no his whole body trembled, and yet-

“Is it that much fun?”

His head snapped up to where Stain finally spoke for the first time since they started.

“Yes?”

“You’re smiling,” the taller man said, looking more bored than anything else. “But you look like you’re dying.”

Deku covered his mouth because if he had to say it, then it would be that he was enjoying it. He liked moving his body around. And more importantly, he was glad that his body was responding well, if a little slowly, to his desires. “I guess so?”

“You don’t know?” Stain asked and then tilted his head, “Or you don’t remember?”

“It sounds like you know the answer to that better than me,” Deku replied with an uncertain smile on his face. He slowly stood back up, placing the water to the side. “I think I’m on the verge of something. It sits at the tip of my tongue. Would you please engage in a spar with me?”

Stain stared at him for a moment longer. He placed his water bottle down and turned around. “I don’t know how to hold back.”

But Deku already knew that.

-

If people could figure out how to fight shadows, it would be like this. Stain was silent and impossibly long, like someone was standing directly in front of a light source, and turning around to face their shadow. He stretched out and swung-and the blow was enough to send Deku’s body off the ground.

His bones trembled, but his heart felt steady. Moreso than the warm-up exercises they just did, it was clear that this was something familiar.

For someone as long and tall as Stain, it felt strange that he could move so fast, but he was nimble. It would be faster to try and catch a cat with his bare hands. He could strike powerfully from almost any angle. Briefly, Deku wondered if he had a quirk that made him a little elastic, or helped with his balance.

More importantly, Deku could follow the movements fine. His body was slow at times, and he caught more blows than he would like-but he could see the fight easily. Combat wasn’t foreign. While being held in someone’s arms was unfamiliar, the stinging pain in his cheek when Stain’s forearm made contact with it was routine.

Taking a step back was pointless, since Stain could cover any distance Deku could make in less than a second. He rushed in instead. He tucked himself against large chest, and dropped. Stain’s eyes widened, and Deku wondered if this was a maneuver he’s never tried.

Deku placed one of his legs behind Stain’s knee and yanked foward with his heel. His balance started to bend so he punched Stain in the throat. His breath caught and Stain punched him in the side. He hissed, dropping to the ground immediately but somehow, his vision remained clear. He grabbed the arm that punched him and used his free leg to kick the older man in the face.

And then, in an impressive display of strength and mobility he didn’t realize he had, he did a low fan kick above his own head and kicked Stain across the face with his heel. He tumbled to the side and Deku wasted no time tackling him onto his back.

Pinned down underneath him, Deku grinned down at the man. He caught Stain’s wrists up and to the side of his head, and sat down on his chest, with his knees resting on his upper arms.

“You look like you’re having fun too,” the young man said, his eyes shining in their mirth as something was returned to him, “Chizome.”

Realization dawned on his face, and Stain, Akakuro, returned his grin with a small smile. The victory wasn’t from being splayed on his back, but the recognition in Deku’s eyes. Deku wouldn't know, of course, if Stain's tender gaze was from losing, or from remembering something fond.

“Welcome back,” the older man said. “And get off me.”

“You have to yield first.”

“...Were you always this cheeky?” He rolled his eyes, “I yield.”

Deku leaned back, wincing as he did so. He pulled off the other man, settling to sit next to him instead. His hands came to his side, but he didn’t let it dampen his spirits. It was a quick spar, but as the adrenaline faded, the pain returned in full force.

He clenched his jaw tightly, trying to breath as slowly as possible. For a brief moment, he felt like he was wrongly placed in the world, and that his rib cage was pressing into his organs. At the same time, he knew that was wrong, because this wasn’t how ruptured organs felt. It was amazing what knowledge he didn’t forget.

“Let me see,” Akakuro’s voice sounded right next to him.

He looked at the man next to him, and after a brief second, nodded his head. His hands were pulled away to his side, and his yukata was parted to survey the damage. Bandages chased the army of angry purple that decorated his chest, and newly formed scars breathed the fresh air.

Red eyes clenched shut as Akakuro tried to focus on his breathing.

There was a long silence, and when Deku peered up at him curiously, saw how Akakuro’s pupils turned into pinpricks. While he did recognize this man a little more now, he didn’t remember everything about him. It was more like there were a few holes in his memory that were filled up. There were plenty of other things that he didn’t remember, and he wouldn’t be shocked if there were things that he never learned to begin with.

Worriedly, he lifted his hand to his face, fingertips coming up to sharp cheeks. This action was about as familiar as the feeling of Hawks' arms around him as they watched the sun sink.

“...Chizome?” he said quietly.

The older man jerked at the touch, but he didn’t pull away. He looked from Deku’s chest to his hand and then dragged his eyes up to meet Deku’s confused gaze.

He sighed deeply, the sound rumbling through his entire body.

“I’ll take you to Nine,” he said.

“Nine?”

“Our resident healer.”

Healer? Not a doctor? Not Natsuo? Not the infirmary?

With that, Akakuro scooped him up into his arms like a princess, and carried him out. He remembered to grab the blanket from before for him.

“This-” Deku choked on his complaints as pain rocked through his body and embarrassment colored his cheeks. The pain kept his body rigid, and Stain acted as though there was nothing strange about this.

Deku would like to calmly point out that this was not a normal occurrence, based on the things he did remember. For a reason different to just a few moments before, his heart rattled in his chest.

“Easy, you must be in a lot of pain,” the man deadpanned back, like he wasn’t the one that caused it.

A crooked grin made its way onto his lips, right underneath his new bruise under his cheekbone, and Deku wished he hit him a little harder. He eventually rested his head against the older man's shoulder, warm in the middle of a snowstorm.

### **13. Wonderland - [Nine]**

Deku grimaced as he woke up.

“Water to the left,” he was told.

He looked to his left, where a water bottle sat. He reached out to it, pleasantly surprised that it didn’t send shockwaves of pain racking all around his body. The dull ache was something he could work with. Popping the cap open, he tipped his head back and took just enough water to keep wet his tongue. He returned everything the way it was.

His hands weren't trembling anymore. Was he getting better?

“Good evening, Deku,” the voice was low, a quiet voice that did nothing to dampen the confidence the man walked in with. “...You probably don’t remember, but you call me Nine,” he said.

In one of his hands was a plate of apples.

“I don’t know what you can stomach yet, but you need to eat something. The kitchen fires should be on soon, so eat this to curb your hunger until then.”

He said that, all while placing the plate of cut apples with a small fork in Deku’s lap. He sat down next to the man, reached over and grabbed one of the apple slices to snack on, too. Immediately, Deku realized that he was showing that the fruit was safe to eat. Even though it probably made more sense to think that this man was just an asshole who would eat the food meant for a patient, the thought didn’t cross his mind.

He began eating as well. The apples were soft and sweet. He doesn't know why he was surprised.

“I was surprised to see you. I heard that you lost your memories from the last battle that left you on bed rest. Imagine my surprise to see you at my door after you had a spar in your condition.”

While he spoke, without changes in pace or tone, it almost felt like there was a machine speaking next to him. At the same time, the gaze that Deku was leveled with had his stomach coiling uncomfortably. Now that the moment had passed, Deku understood that it was a terrible idea to engage in any level of physical activity when it was hard enough to get out of bed on his own. Awful, terrible.

But if he had to, he would do it all again in a heartbeat. That restless feeling settled whenever he remembered the grin on Stain's face.

The man in front of him pulled his long hair out of his ponytail, letting it all come down and around his shoulders before he retied it into a low ponytail. His handsome features, his clear skin pale like moonlight and ice blue eyes like a glacier, leveled him.

“Well, I suppose you’ve always been one to do as you pleased. I guess this is a sign that you’re recovering just fine,” Nine sighed, but like many of the others that he met before this moment, it sounded fond instead of exhausting. “My quirk accelerates the cell growth, but it’s limit is within the cells themselves. Meaning, if you die, I can't help you. This much, however, is child's play. With adequate food and rest, you’ll recover with minimal scarring.”

The young man in front of him nodded back.

“You’re tired, aren’t you? Your body works remarkably hard to keep you alive,” and then he waved his hand in front of him, “Would you like more apples?”

Green eyes traced his movements, the elegance that he held, and Nine tilted his head. His gaze was just as inquisitive, as though he was seeing Deku for the first time as well.

“Memories or not, you’re too easy to read,” he said quietly.

His eyes were cold, and coupled with his blank expression, created a demeanor of a dangerous man. He was tall, towering over Deku even when they were sitting. From the way he sat, crossed-legged and leaning against the back of his chair, to the way his quiet voice spoke firmly, everything about this man radiated danger and power.

But his eyes always returned to meet Deku’s eyes. Deku felt reassured.

“... I took care of the bruises you gave Stain-kun,” Nine said, and then caught himself, “Ah, he’s the man who brought you in. He left to join patrol.”

“...That’s good. I was worried that I had hurt him," Deku admitted. He brought his hand up to his mouth as he thought a little harder, "But since he carried me just fine, I figured it wasn’t deliberating. I told him that I didn’t need to be carried but he did it anyways. When we swung at each other, I hit his ribs several times, but he didn’t even limp. For a while, I didn’t think that I was even doing any damage. The only reason why I managed to pull a win at the end was because he was distracted by something...”

Nine’s eyes widened for a fraction of a second before he laughed instead. It was a sudden sound, like a bomb going off, and after the first syllable, the sound died into soft chuckles like aftershocks. Likewise, Deku’s jaw clicked shut, eyes wide as the sound echoed in the quiet room.

The man covered his eyes, as his shoulders trembled. Staring at him like a fish, Deku blinked and waited.

Eventually, his laughter died off. “You brought me here to this place, Deku," he started, "Truly, when I first met you, it felt like a dream. When I came here, it felt like... a wonderland, too good to be true. Running water and electricity, hygienic and clean, bountiful with food and supplies, and at the top of it was someone strong enough to control the megalomaniacs that wandered about."

He placed his hand over his heart, as he chuckled.

“Even now, entertainment is never a shortage here, is it? To learn that you, with or without your memories, is the same person, has filled me such elation.”

What was so funny? What could make those glacier eyes melt? What shattered that stoney-expression? How could all these people who are so fundamentally different still look at him with that same expression-looking like they didn’t know if they wanted to laugh or cry?

A wonderland? A place that was filled with things that filled people with wonder?

If monsters truly roamed about on the outside, then any place would be a wonderland, wouldn't it?

That expression on Nine’s face, that looked defeated and content all in one, was that wonder? Then yes, this place must be a wonderland. A place that could bring that expression across all sorts of people. People who clearly didn’t interact much or even liked each other, seemed to all converge onto this single emotion.

“I wish for your speedy recovery, Deku.”

Deku finished the plate of apples. The uneasy sensation in his gut didn't settle.

### **14. Chimes - [Jiro + Kaminari]**

Let’s say that he was the Leader here. He was some big, strong, head-honcho that people actually listened to. And assume that the sound of laughter was something joyous, and that there were plenty of people that looked excited to see him and eager to help him in any way.

and that would also mean that he wasn’t some ruthless tyrant, and that he wasn’t a scapegoat either.

There was a pin in his stomach that his heart dangled over precariously.

Didn’t that mean that he needed to regain his memories ASAP then? If he was a real leader that was respected and cared for, then he needed to protect this place. It's okay to take some time to heal right now, since there aren't any problems, right?

Then, what would happen when 'peace' ends?

Regardless, he needed to defend this place and create proper plans and ideas moving forward into the future. Wasn’t that super important for him to have together? Weren’t they in the middle of an on-going battle with monsters? Could they afford to have him out of commission at all? His head started to ache again.

But as soon as he thought one thing and as soon as his heart settled onto one theory he might have...

"Oh wow, it's snowing again!"

"Oh man, we just finished shoveling too..."

…His thoughts trailed dangerously.

Snow? Deku thought with sinking revelation. Of course it was snow. The white precipitations that fell gently to the ground and added into the blankets of winter below... Yes, the more he stared, the more obvious it was, of course it was snow.

He didn't get it but this whole time, he just thought something was on fire and that all of this was actually ash.

Why would that be his initial thought? How could he drop his guard to just think if he thought that something was burning this much? Would it possible to be cold if there was this much ash? After all, if there's ash, there must be a fire, right?

There was something about this whole thing, being buried in ash, shoveling through ash, all of it was painfully familiar and it made his head ache. Most of all his wounds were fine. The pain had tampered off, and it wasn’t like anything was broken.

But there was unexplainable pain that pulsed through him.

And then, piercing through his thoughts like a bullet, he heard a song. A song that was so familiar that his eyes started to water. He peered down, determined to hear the source of that sound.

The sound, the rhythm, tone and words, filled him like a warm meal, from the pit in his chest all the way to the tips of his extremities. It echoed in his head like a chime in the middle of the day-ringing inside of him.

“Oh, Jiro, isn't that the theme from that Star Anime?”

“Yeah, I figured out the melody on the piano yesterday after I binged it with Tsuyu. It got stuck in my head” a young girl said, twirling a long strand of something beige around her fingers. After another moment of staring, Deku realized that it was connected to her ears. “Let’s hurry up and finish this so I can figure out of it.” She shook the shovel in her hand, before tapping it back down several times to create a basic beat as she vocalized a small melody.

His heart swelled.

Without much thought, Deku placed both hands on the ledge and vaulted over the side of it. He dropped down into a roll on the floor below and next to them.

“Oh my god, Deku!” He startled both of them. He should apologize.

“The beat,” Deku said instead, coming right up to Jirou with a wide-eyed look, “Could I… could I come listen, too?”

Jirou, and the young blond next to her, exchanged a look before she turned back. She smiled, but she still looked like she was still recovering from her surprise. Deku kicked himself, he should apologize first, but his selfish desires came out instead.

“...Yeah, of course. You got any requests? I can play a few beats.”

“Do I… usually have any?” Apologize, Deku.

She shook her head. “I usually play a little live music on the weekends,” she said, “so if you don’t mind acoustic, I can bring a guitar around to the commons after dinner tonight.”

Deku nodded back, “Okay,” he agreed quickly. It felt too far away, but he felt like he was right at the cusp of something. And right before anyone could say anything else, he asked, “Where is the commons?”

Her face fell.

“It’s uh...Uh, the main lobby place in the main building,” she said, pointing at the building to the left.

He searched his memory, “The Lounge?”

“No, that’s in this building,” her voice got even quieter, her eyes wide as she stared at him.

“Wow, you really did forget everything, huh?” the blond by her side blurted out.

“Kaminari,” she hissed back.

“I did,” Deku replied, confirming it. He hesitated, looking a little apologetic before he continued. “I’m sorry if it causes any trouble. I’m working on it. I've been getting it back, pieces of a time. It's slow, but it's a progress. I think that going around places and doing thing that I normally do will jog back some memories..." His words trailed off as he realized that he started to mutter, and hesitantly stared at the other two.

The two paused before they both began to frantically shake their head.

“No, no, no trouble,” Kaminari said.

“Kaminari’s just an idiot without a filter,” Jirou added. “Don’t mind anything he says.”

“Hey, don’t you think that’s a little harsh?”

“Oh, shut up. You barely have two brain cells to rub together. And you don’t even know what that means.”

“Ouch! Your words hurt me, you know!”

And Deku, believing that he was being helpful, offered, “Nine’s really good at healing. You should go to him for pains and aches.”

The two paled considerably.

“I’ll live with this,” Kaminari said.

And at the expression on Deku’s face, Jirou shrugged back.

“It’s nothing on you. Nine is a little… intense sometimes.”

The words spun in Deku’s head. Natsuo’s warning resurfaced in his head, like an old tape stuck in a broken tape recorder that only repeated one line over and over again. It overlapped with the man who cut his apples into slices and handed him a fork.

“...If it’s scary,” he started quietly. “Is it safe?”

Both of them shut their mouths in an instant, and their eyes widened comically.

“I mean like, yeah?” Kaminari said. “Like, he’s pretty scary and really intense, but he’s one of us.”

Deku titled his head, confused, and waited for an explanation. The blond turned to Jiro, as though he couldn’t explain his thoughts but figured she could.

“What Kaminari means is that he’s trustworthy,” Jirou said, throwing a nasty side-eye at the man. “We can trust him not to turn against you. And well, that’s enough to live here.”

“...But you trust me not to turn?” Deku asked, the words meaning more than he knew how to proceed with.

Jirou didn’t hesitate. The girl with a song that made his heart melt had a gun strapped to her thigh, held her head up high and she explained to him with certainty.

“Of course,” she said. And then, she looked confused, as though the thought never occurred to her, “Why would you turn against us when we’d just follow you anyways?”

And the blond next to her looked just as confused as Deku felt. The words swirled around his head, like an earworm he couldn’t remember the name of.

Perhaps he was in the wrong. Perhaps, he needed to figure out who he was here before he tried to give it a label. And he needed to do it quickly, because having that kind of loyalty and trust was a burden when he didn’t know anything about it.

“It’s okay,” Jirou said, still just as certain. “Like, it’s okay if you don’t remember.”

His head ached, and his heart hollowed out.

“Yeah, don’t try so hard,” Kaminari said. “If you don’t remember, maybe there’s a reason for that.”

“Kaminari,” Jirou snapped back.

Perhaps. Perhaps. Perhaps.

He kept repeating it, even though it had no meaning.

### **15. Silent Night - [Shouji]**

Meals were rambunctious. Following the smell of food, the sound of loud chatter seemed to swell in the area around them. The sound echoed down the hallway, and it felt like the snow framed the signs of domestic peace beautifully.

Deku breathed on his fingers, feeling a little chilled, but he remained where he was. Somehow, it felt wrong to go where everyone else was. Even though there was nothing physically there, he felt like there was an impenetrable barrier keeping him away from the dining halls. He couldn’t shake the thought that something was missing-

“-missing something?”

Deku didn’t flinch, despite the fact that he had no idea someone had approached him. And relaxed further instead when he turned around and saw a man coming closer. The snow crunched softly underneath his feet, treading gently over the freshly-fallen snow. He had four arms out, and an extra appendage coming out of his shoulder with a mouth at the end of it. Was that his quirk? It looked extremely useful.

It looked incredibly familiar.

“Deku, here,” the large man said, handing over a belt with a knife on it. “I’ve been meaning to get it to you, but I kept missing you.”

The young man took the knife into his hand. It was heavier than it looked.

“...It’s pretty heavy,” he said quietly.

He clipped it around his waist, the gesture so familiar, and he pulled the knife out. That was not familiar. He adjusted it some more, until the knife was practically laying across the back of his waist. He drew the knife from behind him.

This. This felt nostalgic.

Briefly, he thought that he remembered something. Unlike some of his other memories, that threatened to split his head in half, he felt like a snowflake was landing on him. As quiet and as light as it was, it still landed, and something returned to him.

Taking a deep breath, he turned back to Shouji, and gave a polite bow. “Thank you, Mezo.”

The man shrugged back, “No problem. Getting things back to their owners is normal,” he said.

“Does it happen a lot?” Deku asked.

The taller man stared at him for a moment. Deku wondered if he was trying to formulate an answer, or if he was working through the shock of the question.

The snow continued to fall. Given how slowly they seemed to float down, it almost felt like time was slowing down.

“Everyone here’s lost a lot, well, lost enough,” Mezo quickly amended. “So, when we can, I don’t think it’s bad to return what we don’t have to lose.”

From such a big and intimidating looking man, it was a kind sentiment. Deku, standing in the middle of this cold snowfall, felt inexplicitly warm. A little further away, he could hear the others burst out into a laugh before it settled down into something quieter. Amber lights poured out of the lights, beckoning any weary soul in.

In a place like this, he supposed that silent nights were the worst things, weren’t they?

“Still,” Deku said, because he’s gotten so much more than this knife, “Thank you.”

Shouji smiled, his mask crinkling and eyes shining, and Deku couldn’t believe that he could have forgotten such a gentle expression. How could anyone wish to forget such a thing?

“Are you going to eat anything?” Shouji asked, motioning to the dining halls behind him.

“I’m not hungry,” he lied. It came off smoother than he thought. “Are you?”

The taller man nodded, but he remained next to Deku. The two looked up, watching the snowflakes drop when their building lights reflected off of them. It was like watching a thousand fireflies descend to the earth, in the middle of winter.

“I can wait.”

“...You don’t have to.”

“Yeah,” Shouji agreed. “I don’t.”

The weight of a weapon on him, the company of someone precious next to him, the hum of lively joy behind him, and Deku felt a little more whole.

### **16. Video Clips - [Takeyama, Kamui]**

“Senpai, this is the last of them!”

Deku turned the corner to see a beautiful blond in the hallway. With a wide grin and a box of something in her arms, she pushed the box towards it into the man made of wood. Green eyes followed the transaction, something about the scene tugging at him.

“Man, I can’t believe we had so many of these.”

“Good work Takeyama,” the man of wood said before he gently chided her, “These videos have saved our lives a few times. ”

“Yeah, yeah,” she said, rolling her shoulders, “I know, other people’s footage and ours are important so we know what’s going on even without patrols.”

“I can do without the attitude,” her senpai sighed. “Honestly, you spend too much time with… ah, Deku?”

His eyes widened considerably when he saw the younger man down the hall. Seeing no reason to hide, even though it made his skin crawl to have people suddenly start starring at him, he gave a small wave.

“Oh! Deku!” the blond cheered loudly. Somehow, Midoriya found her friendly energy intimidating, but he managed a small smile in return. “How are you feeling?”

He shrugged, “Well enough. How are you?”

There was a brief pause. Did he say the wrong thing? Or was it a problem that he spoke at all?

“Doing great, sir!” she cheered back, getting over her pause as though it never happened. "What brings you around here? Are you lost?"

"Takeyama," the warning tone came from the wooden man.

"I heard some noise so I came," Deku explained quietly. He looked at the boxes. "Are these… video tapes?"

"Yeah, old-fashioned, right?" Takeyama said, "I didn't even realize that we used actual tapes for surveillance."

Deku tilted his head. "Surveillance," he parroted.

"Actually, we have it hooked up to real hardware stuff now. All of ours is digital now, but when we get footage like this, we don't have a choice but to use 'old-fashioned' tapes."

"Wow, as expected of Senpai."

Pro-Hero Kamui Woods spluttered out a flustered, "oh shut up, you!" before he turned to Deku, "Is there anything you need? Something we can help with? We're just about done here."

His memories, preferably. But Deku figured he probably shouldn't say that.

He looked at the tapes, "Could I watch these?"

"It'll take some time to set up," Kamui Wood replied, "and all of it are just camera angles of parking lots and elevators from places around town, so don't expect too much action."

Deku nodded, thinking about it. He could still feel their gaze on him, like they've never seen him before or something. It made his skin crawl at the attention.

"...If it's not too much trouble…"

"Of course. Give me... four minutes? Don't worry, I like watching them too-"

"-what's a pro-hero?"

There was another pause. The pair stared at him in mixed stages of shock.

"You don't remember what a pro-hero is?" Kamui asked quietly.

The way he said it, it must have been a permanent fixture of society. Deku wondered if he asked what the police was, he would have gotten the same response. Was this like Quirks?

“Oh uhn, Pro-Hero, like uhm, Professional Hero. We use our quirks to keep the peace and catch criminals,” Takeyama jumped in to explain.

The throbbing intensified. It felt like he could hear his heartbeat in his ear.

Quirk? Heroes? Peace by catching criminals?

He swore, for a moment, he could see flowers exploding out in a gray smoke and a blur of blond. He couldn't place anything concrete.

Then, what about monsters? Or do they have to worry about monsters and criminals? He supposed that made sense, but his gut twisted. Do they really have the law and justice system still active? Even now? Where would they put prisoners? Were they all prisoners, with the monsters as their jailers?

It couldn't be. If they did, wouldn't Deku be the first one that should be delivered to justice? Was he leading a prison revolt?

His thoughts swam. It was getting harder to breathe. He was drowning in what he couldn't remember.

“...Pro… Hero?” he whispered again. He cradled his head into his hand, feeling as though if he didn’t keep his hand on his head, it would split open and his brain would splatter out. “A h-hero?”

It ached. Somewhere, deep inside, the words echoed like someone was screaming for him to listen. There was something here, something that was fundamentally missing, but he didn't know what.

“Deku? Oi, Deku, are you okay?”

“Hey, he’s really pale-”

“Oh my god, Deku, I’m so sorry-"

“Takeyama, go get Natsuo!”

“R-roger!”

“No, I’m fine,” Deku said. He tried to say. His words sounded slurred even to himself.

He shook his head, and focused on regaining control over himself. The pounding against his skull was manageable, he told himself. This was fine. He was fine. He didn’t deserve that look on their faces, the emotions that they were feeling. He knew that. So, he had to tell them that he was fine because otherwise, he would take advantage of their kindness.

“No, I … I’m fine,” he said. “I… Sometimes, when I’m close to remembering something, this happens. It’s okay. It’s not...”

The worst of the headache passed. He took a deep breath, and managed to salvage a smile for them.

“I’m fine.”

The look that they gave him. He finally remembered the name for that look.

Concern.

And the sight of it made him sore, like an old wound that had been left to fester for far too long was finally getting poked and prodded.

Why did he remember that he was undeserving of their concern? How did 'hero' trigger that?

If he truly forgot because he wanted to forget, then why did he want to forget "hero"?

### **17. Revenge - [Ojiro]**

By the time Deku got to the cafeteria, it was barren. Half the tables were still out for people to sit and talk out, playing cards and betting candy wrappers, and the other half was pushed up and against the wall. Those that saw him waved in confusion, as though they didn’t understand why he was here but welcomed it. When he waved back, they froze like they were statues.

“Ara? Deku!”

The young man looked to where he was called, eyes wide as he blinked at the man that came closer.

“Good evening, Deku,” the blond said. A giant tail wrapped around his back and landed on the top of his shoulder. Despite how big and heavy it looked, it rested just above his shoulder, and didn’t place any weight on him.

Deku dipped his head in return. “G-good evening…” his voice trailed off, his quiet words turning into nothing and the blond gave a kind smile in return.

“Ojiro Masahiro,” he said, “You uh… you call me Masa though.”

“Masa?” Deku replied back.

A brilliant red flush crossed Ojiro’s cheeks at that. The taller man rubbed the back of his neck, sheepish and shy in an odd contrast to his build, “Y-yeah? What's up?”

“Do you know if there’s any leftovers?”

Several screeching noises were heard and the cafeteria fell into a deathly silence. Deku blinked, was there a food-shortage? Was he abusing his authority by asking for more? Were mealtimes rigid? Did he miss his window of opportunity? It was fine if he did, he would wait until the next time to eat something. It would also be nice if someone just, well, said it.

“Y-You wanna uh… eat something?” Ojiro asked, and Deku gave a slow nod, “Yeah, uh, we have some stuff. Come on, I’ll take you to the kitchen.”

Was that trustworthy? Somehow, Deku felt like if he started to question that, it would never end. Figuring that there would be faster and better ways to kill him, he went along with it.

“Thank you,” Deku said, falling into step next to him. Even though the man was noticeably taller than him, his strides matched pace with Deku.

The smile on his face returned without much effort. Definitely trustworthy then.

“It looked like there were pre-designated meal times,” Deku said quietly as they entered the kitchen, “What are they?”

“Huh?” Ojiro frowned before realization dawned on his face, “Oh, no, uh… More so than designated meal times, those are the times that Lunchrush makes food for whoever comes in. And well, his food is really delicious. But anyone can come in and cook whenever they want.” He walked over to the stove first, getting a kettle on. “Hot tea good?” he asked even as he turned the fire on.

Then why did they act like that when he asked for leftovers? The words couldn’t come out.

“Yes, thank you,” Deku agreed. His eyes traced the kitchen, the immaculately cleanliness of it and how it shined like diamonds. He looked at the blond, “There’s no worry about food shortages?”

Ojiro blinked.

His expression turned a little somber before he continued to speak, “We used to. Worry about that, I mean, but we’re pretty good about it now. We grow a lot of our food, and we have a little farm. It definitely helps that we got some green-thumbs with us, and others who can communicate with animals and stuff. So we can even eat seconds at any meals,” he continued. “We’re pretty responsible, huh?”

Hearing it from Ojiro, who was pulling a container out of a large, industrial-sized, fridge with a wide grin on his face, he smiled back. He was glad that food wasn’t a concern.

“We got ice quirks to help with the freezing process. We have an electric-based quirk and a bunch of actual engineers and mechanics that can make sure our electricity and stuff doesn’t fail us. We had some farmers and stuff joining us too, since last year or so,” he continued as he passed the container Deku.

Deku thought it before but quirks really made life convenient.

“You did that, you know,” he said. “The people that live here, the people that work here, the food that we eat and grow here, the buildings we made and maintain, everything here was done by your effort.”

He poured the tea out into two mugs. He passed one to Deku as the two leaned against the counter.

“Are you…”

“I already ate,” Ojiro said, and flashed a cheeky grin, “but I’ll never turn down a cup of tea.”

They waited for the tea to seep. Ojiro watched the steam rise like it was so much more than hot water.

“For a while, even getting this was hard, you know?”

Deku stared back at him for a moment, and took a bite of the onigiri. It was cold to the touch, but the tea was hot. He ate slowly, the polarizing temperatures warring in his mouth in a delightful way.

“What about now?” he asked.

“Eh?”

Deku swallowed, took a sip and tried again, “What about now? What are we working on now?”

“Oh, oh!” Ojiro’s eyes lit up when he understood and smiled back, “We’re working on building back. Getting rid of the monsters and stuff in the area and cleaning them out. We're just finished out with unearthing the train stations and getting all the cars out of the roads.”

“...And then what?” he asked. He finished the onigiri, and there were three more in the container. He wasn’t hungry anymore. Should he eat another one anyways? He focused on the tea, watching as the steam escaped upwards.

“We’ll decide then,” Ojiro said, “It’s a little far into the future. ”

Was that really the attitude of someone living through an apocalypse?

"...Is it alright to be so carefree?" he asked.

"Carefree?"

“From the sounds of it, we’ve lived off of what we stole from other people who aren’t here to defend their things. We kill all those that come to kill us, things of that nature,” Deku’s voice was quiet but firm. The talk of the future focused on rebuilding and taking back, but was it even theirs to begin with? It might sound arrogant, since he didn't even remember what the monsters outside were, but for all he knew, the 'monsters' were just other people.

The man winced. “...The way you phrased that is a little…”

“Then, if we kill all the monsters and we take back this area, doesn’t that mean that the next people to die will be us?” he asked. He finished one onigiri and went for the next one.

In front of him, Ojiro froze.

“N-no way, since we… We’re just doing what we need to do to survive.”

Deku closed his eyes and thought about it. He repeated the information he had again in his head.

Half a decade, the world ended. The world ended but they had hot chocolate here. Everyone was dressed in a variety of different ways, ranging from bright and flashy colors or muted ones, but all of them were clean and different. It was easy to see where the priorities must have fallen, but astonishing to see that almost all of them had been met. His eyes trailed around the kitchen again, appliances run by electricity, food from the earth, and clean like it came from a tv show. It looked new. It was clearly well-cared for.

“Is survival the go-to excuse for everything here?” the young man asked. “That all and every action is excusable because we wanted to survive?”

As a leader, was this the world that he wanted to build?

Then, right now, they weren’t fighting to survive. They weren’t fighting to take back whatever or kill all the monsters that caused this. This might be a revenge story, but they weren’t the avengers. They were the people the vengeful scorned. At this time, all the people who fled their homes for whatever reasons may be returning. They would return to nothing, for Deku and his people had stripped the area here bare in an effort to pad their lives in age-old luxuries.

He covered his face as the reality of the situation saturated in his heart. It was probably because he was too far-removed from this equation.

Mass murder on one side. Rampant pillaging on the other. Thinking of it like that, who was really the monster?

“Deku,” Ojiro said, his voice firm, “I… I don’t really get what you’re trying to say. But I… I think that the path your thoughts are taking a dangerous turn. We did what we had to do at first because we didn’t want to die. Then, we did what we needed to do so that we didn’t have to live in fear. But even if we did the wrong thing and this was a terrible idea, if I had to go back in time, I would do it all over again.”

Ojiro stared right into Deku’s eyes. And Deku didn’t understand what this man saw that he could be so certain.

“You weren’t wrong.”

The look that Ojiro gave him was the same as the one Jiro gave him, as Dabi as Aizawa and many other side-glances he had caught walking around the base. It was the same damn look that made him nauseous to the pit of his stomach.

That fear came creeping back, like a shadow he couldn’t avoid, like the bite of the cold, and Deku burned his tongue on the tea.

“Thank you for the meal,” he said. The meal that he ate, at the top of the mountain of corpses he made on the way here, was delicious and a little bitter.

“I uh… yeah,” Ojiro said quietly, “Uh… Are you okay? Do you want to go to the infirmary to rest for a bit?”

Deku nodded his head. “...Yes, I think that will be good.”

His bone weary exhaustion settled into his body, but now, he had an idea on why.

### **18. Tears [Shinsou]**

Within two steps of making it outside, several dogs began to bark. On reflex, Deku’s hand dropped to his knife, his eyes darting to the source of the sound.

“Oh, patrol’s back,” Ojiro said, “Nothing to be alarmed about.”

He said that, and Deku would have believed him, but the blond’s hand had been reaching for something in his jacket pocket. No doubt, weapon. When the blond pulled his hand out and a particularly strong breeze opened it up a bit, Deku’s eyes caught on something shiny.

Nothing to be alarmed about, but his hand went to his gun. A weight found itself in Deku’s heart, sinking into his stomach. The place that he led, did he really do a good job if people were so jumpy and always armed? The way he dismissed the sound made him believe that this was routine. And yet...

“It’s on the way to the infirmary,” Ojiro said, “We'll probably run into them. Ready?”

Deku nodded back, getting right into step with him.

“I … have a question,” he said quietly.

“I’ll do my best to answer it,” the blond replied.

“... Are patrols frequent?”

The young man shrugged back, “Not sure what frequent really means, in context,” he said. “But we have a minimum of two to three patrols going in and out. We’re uh… a pretty relaxed group that goes out and does things as they please. Some patrols run all day and other times, we have eight patrols going in and out.”

The words lined up to what Hawks was saying earlier. Deku didn’t think that they were lying or anything, but it never hurt to double check. Just because they didn’t lie to his face didn't mean that the information would be correct either, after all.

“Oh, there they are,” Ojiro said, and after a moment of observation, “It looks like there were no injuries.”

“Are injuries common?” His side was a dull pang. He would never wish it upon anyone else.

The blond shook his head, “We’ve gotten a lot better. We have the occasional hiccups, but for the most part, we rarely have anything worse than a few scrapes. When it comes to the really big and scary monsters, it gets a little more dicey, but we haven’t really lost anyone in months.” He motioned at Deku, “Yours was a product of bad circumstances coupled with a peculiar monster. I heard the ceiling came down on you mid-fight.”

The words didn’t trigger anything. But he supposed that the person that he answered the back-up call of didn’t trigger anything, so recounting a second-hand experience wouldn’t give him much either.

He would have kept speaking, when someone called out.

Deku looked around, when a tail came to cover his mouth. Ojiro’s eyes narrowed as he took a full step in front of him. He couldn’t see his face, since Ojiro’s bigger frame blocked off his entire vision. He peaked out from his side, where he saw a tired-looking man with purple hair. Shadows under his eyes seemed to pull at them heavily, leaving bags the size of coins.

“Don’t answer him,” Ojiro said quietly. “Shinsou’s quirk is brainwash. If you respond to him, you’ll obey him without any control of yourself.”

< Not everyone here has good intentions. >

“...How cold,” the man said, voice smooth like satin as his lips twisted upwards into something that bordered on cruel, “I was just going to ask how he was feeling.”

The blond narrowed his eyes, clenching his jaw tightly as he stood his ground. Still, he didn't speak.

“No need to be like that, we all know that no one is going to harm Deku here,” he continued. “We’re all on the same side, in that sense.”

< Like, he’s pretty scary and really intense, but he’s one of us. >

Still, there was no answer. The soft tail remained against Deku’s face.

“...Well fine, be like that,” he sighed. He tilted his head, trying to peer around Ojiro to look at Deku and curious green eyes, but the blond moved in the same direction, determined to keep them from even looking at each other. If it bothered the purple-haired man, he didn’t show it. “...If you’re here, you were probably curious about patrol, right? We all came back, safe and sound. No injuries, no casualties.”

And Deku couldn’t help but think about how telling it was, that the thing everyone kept repeating was that they were safe and uninjured. He couldn’t tell if it was because it was because they thought it was the most important thing to him, or because they wanted to reassure him that they didn’t need him to get better quickly.

“Well, the real report is going to be filed by Aizawa-san,” he said, turning around. “Later.”

Peeking around Ojiro, Deku couldn’t shake the feeling that the man looked incredibly lonely.

“Sorry about that, Deku,” Ojiro said, glaring after the other man. His expression was tight as he spoke quietly, “Just be careful around Shinsou. I don’t know how you managed to get him to work with you before, but just… just be careful.”

“...By living carefully, did we live? Was this place created because everyone here was so careful they could not speak?”

The taller man flinched backwards, his tail swinging back around him, like he had been shocked, and Deku turned his head to the retreating figure.

“Shinsou,” he called out, his voice so loud that it scratched his own throat, “I’m alright. Thank you for returning back safely.”

Shinsou whipped around, eyes wide in their disbelief before they started to water. This did not look like someone who wanted to take advantage of him. He didn’t look like someone that wanted to hurt others or manipulate them into doing something unsavory or anything.

He looked like he was hurting, aching, and praying that someone could see and someone would notice.

It made Deku wonder if 'living carefully’ was worthwhile.

“...He told you what my quirk is, right? That all you need to do is reply to me?”

“Yes,” Deku said, and Ojiro jerked next to him.

Still, all he could see was how the thin figure in front of him looked. The trust extended to him by a single word must have been extraordinarily heavy, because his shoulders sagged even more.

“Hitoshi,” he said, cancelling whatever strange haze came over Deku’s mind. “You used to call me Hitoshi, you know.”

“Oh, okay-”

He jerked, the same way Ojiro jerked next to him, and Shinsou waved his hand. Their eyes met, one more time, and Shinsou gave this breathless laugh-like he was drowning in the tears that didn’t come.

“You never learn,” and he said it so fondly.

People, normally, would cry when they’re sad and scream when they’re lonely. Fat tears would cascade down their face as the sadness seeped into them, and their voice would claw against their throat in order to prove that they were not alone. And yet.

“Welcome back,” Deku said. “Please give my regards to patrol.” Was that leader-like?

“...Thank you,” Shinsou said, probably meaning more than the words without memory. He dipped his head, “We’re… back.” He said it, like the words were foreign to him, like his tongue was taffy and he had to scrape it off the sides of his mouth to get these words out.

Deku wondered if it was because he lived carefully.

He left, and Deku met eyes with Aizawa further away. The older man gave a little wave, one that was returned, and they both turned away. It was so familiar, even though it must have looked curt and rude, but Deku had already turned his attention back to Ojiro.

“You’re… really fearless, huh?” Ojiro said breathless like he watched Deku commit an incredible feat of courage. “C’mon, let’s get you back to the infirmary.”

This time, Deku listened.

### **19. Please Forget About Me - [Natsuo?????]**

“I think it’s coming back to me,” Deku admitted to Natsuo. “Bit by bit.”

He pulled the yukata back on, and tied his sash as best he could. His hands shook a little, but it was much better than it was before. Still, he must have looked unbearably messy though, because Natsuo gave an exasperated sigh when he saw it. He leaned forward and retied it for him, and Deku moved his hands away so that he had better access to it.

“...It’s okay if it doesn’t,” the doctor said. “I think it’s fine.”

Deku frowned back, puzzled.

Wasn’t it better that he remembered? Then, he wouldn’t be such a waste of space and effort, and he would stop making people uncomfortable just by being there. He could, they all could, go back to doing what they were used to. They wouldn’t look so lost, and he would be able smooth out their brittle edges a little more. The wary gazes they threw at each other wouldn’t hurt him so.

...Or maybe...

“...Was I a bad person?” Deku asked quietly.

“No,” Natsuo snapped back, startled that Deku could ever ask that. “Not even close.” He finished tying up the yukata, and Deku took a step back to look at Natsuo fully.

The older man remained kneeling on the ground, his hands hanging in front of him for a second longer before he dropped them to his lap. Slowly, he got back up to his feet and he walked over to the counters. Leaning back on it, he stared at Deku.

The green-haired man tilted his head to the side, and finally asked the question he was holding onto, “Then, wouldn’t it be better to remember?”

“I… I didn’t mean it like that,” the doctor said. He sighed and ran his hand through his hair. “It’s just that I…” he trailed off for a moment. His eyes searched Deku’s face and he tried again, “You’re a little more closed-off, usually. Like, super-independent. I don’t…” he hesitated again, looking from Deku to the door and then back. “And I… I don’t want you to remember why you felt like you had to do that.”

Deku blinked back and looked at his hands.

Then, did he forget because he wanted to?

He thought about Hawks and his warm wings. It was unfamiliar but it gave him so much courage. That feeling radiated from the center of his chest to the tips of his fingers and toes, as he remembered the touch of a hot mug and warm shoes.

Was that really worth forgetting?

“...What did I forget?” he asked quietly. He placed his hand over his heart, “If I remember, would this stop feeling so empty?”

The older man scrunched his face up, like he was watching someone too, “I don’t know,” he said quietly. “But just because you remember doesn’t mean it won’t be empty then too.”

Green eyes landed on Natsuo’s features. The thought didn’t even occur to him. Expression pensive, however, the older man kept his eyes on the ground.

"There's a lot of things that aren't worth remembering," he said quietly.

Was that something that could be decided by another person?

It’s been almost a day and a half since he woke up without his memories. Was it time to live like he won’t regain it all back? Then, what about what he did remember? If he was remembering anything at all, wasn’t that enough of a reason to keep trying? From the way people talked about it, it was like he was choosing not to remember. That he could choose to remember.

In the time he was lost in his thoughts, Natsuo came up to him. Collecting Deku's hands into his, his large hands dwarfed his. “We’re not in a rush for anything,” Natsuo said, his voice shaking. Bringing up their hands to his forehead, his eyebrows pinched as he clenched his eyes shut, as though sending a prayer with all his heart. “And we’re not in a terrible place, lost in our despair either. So it’s okay if you want to take the time to slowly work through this.”

But even if Deku knew that Natsuo wasn’t lying, he didn’t believe him.

### **20. Diary [Tsukauchi]**

“Good evening,” the call came at the door, “Is this a good time?”

Natsuo leaned back in his seat, looking about seven years older than he did at the start of the check-up.

“Yeah, I… need to get some fresh air. Excuse me,” Natsuo said, standing up. “If you need anything,” he pointed to the bell on the small drawer next to Deku, “ring this and it’ll call a dog, which will alert us. Please don’t leave without saying anything again.”

The young man nodded back, not sure what again alluded to.

“Thank you, Natsuo-sensei,” he said.

And Natsuo’s expression twisted again. Without another word, he left the room.

“...Well, it’s been a while since I needed to do this but,” the man who entered the room gave a friendly smile and a wave, “My name is Tsukauchi Naomasa. How are you feeling, Deku?”

“I’m okay, thank you for asking,” Deku replied back. He tilted his head to the side. Almost everyone here had been frank and blunt about what he called them, but this man didn’t. Hesitantly, he ventured a quiet, “...Tsukauchi-san?”

“It’s a little distant, but if that’s what you're comfortable with,” Tsukauchi said, scratching his cheek in a rather bashful way. He smiled back, gentle and genuine. He reached into his pocket, “I won’t eat into too much of your time, since I know that you’re supposed to be resting, but I wanted to give this to you.”

He handed a thin notebook to him.

“This is your planner,” he said. “It might help jog your memory, it might not. However, it's yours. I wanted to get it back to you."

The knife Shoji returned to him shined on the small table next to him.

“Thank you,” Deku said, taking it into his hands and then dropping it to his lap. He eyed it. It was well-worn, with some stains and some of the pages folded carelessly and crumpled up. He hesitated for another moment. “...Would it be better for me to remember?” he asked.

The man looked surprised at the question, his eyebrows nearly touching his hairline. He tilted his head, considering the question.

“There are pros and cons to both,” he said, “but more than me, isn't this something that you should decide for yourself?”

Which was a valid point, but Deku felt like he was standing on a patch of ice, ready to plunge into cold waters. He didn’t really have a choice on whether he remembered or not.

“...But, I can share a bit of unwanted advice anyways,” the older man ventured on. “I don’t think that memories are something you should forget. Everything we experienced contributes to the person we are today. There’s always a part of us that we wished didn’t happen, but even those regrets help us in making decisions and the like as well.”

Deku nodded.

“But, we’re not as weak and desperate as we used to be,” Tsukachi said, a reassuring smile on his face, and he chuckled when he saw the confused look on Deku’s face, “What I mean by that is that you can take your time to remember. There’s nothing wrong with taking the time you need to recover.”

Looking at him, he didn’t think that he was lying. Still, the feeling didn’t ebb. He looked down at the planner.

“...What does that mean?” he asked quietly. “Recovery.”

“It means your injuries heal, your appetite returns, and you look forward to life more than hate it.”

A silence stretched between them.

“If I remember, will I recover?”

“...I don’t know,” the older man said, “It’s shameful, but I was never a part of your recovery process. I don’t even know how you dealt with what you experienced.” He leaned forward, his elbows on his knees, and his head in his hands. He took a deep breath, as though his life was the one that was on the line. “I don’t know what you forgot, and it isn’t like that’s something we can easily find out either.”

Under Deku’s hand, the blanket bunched under his grip.

“But I can tell you what I can do. What I want to do. I want to support you, regardless of what you decide, and regardless of what happens. When the time to face the consequences of our actions come, I will stand by your side.”

It happened again. A thick blanket made of iron laid on his heart, pressing down with its weight and immovable otherwise as Tsukauchi spoke of a loyalty Deku couldn’t fathom.

“Take whatever time. I… We, the people who live here and treasure what you treasured, will protect the here and now. Some things are easy to relearn, other things will come with time. Even if you don’t remember, you won’t be alone.”

A prickling sensation came into his eyes, heating it up. He dropped his gaze, unable to find any words as he worked his jaw. Was he touched? Was this something that he wanted to hear before? The thought that the kind people he had met so far would be so cold and so isolating felt disjointed. Was he guilty then? That the warmth being shown wasn’t for him, but a him that he didn’t remember? Or, somewhere deep in his subconsciousness where he wanted to forget, did he know that he was undeserving?

“Thank you,” he said, for the information. The words lodged in his throat though.

“Anytime,” Tsukauchi replied back. “We’re all pretty much family at this point, so don’t hold back alright? This place is home to all of us, and you’re a part of that. Well, I’ll leave you to it.”

And just like that, the man left.

He looked to the planner in his lap and flipped through it. The dates patterned through a week in January. From the time to the people who went, the pages were detailed. The names that were mentioned, like how Jirou led the west team, and how Shigaraki found the nest, brought the faces of the people he met. Other names, like this Danjuro who reported a change in bird sightings, and a Jurota who led the hunting-team for the first time, didn’t even tickle his memory.

His eyes slid across the, frankly boring, notes. Information about what he had done was written, as well as some side notes concerning supplies and notes for the future, like double-checking generators and setting up another water-filter. There was great and elaborate detail on the weather, the scenery, the buildings, and the monsters that were encountered on patrols. He couldn’t tell if all of these were actually important information, or if it was a habit.

Somehow, looking at the descriptions made his head begin to ache. His stomach twisted uncomfortably. He closed the planner. Placing it on top of the children’s book, his gaze lingered on the ring next to it. The blanket he carried around earlier was over his lap. In these moments, he understood that there must be something that his body didn’t want to remember, no matter how much he wanted to remember. Like an itch he couldn’t reach, it annoyed him to no end.

He closed his eyes.

When Deku slept, he didn’t dream.

He didn’t know if it had always been like this.

### **21. Bizarre - [Sakamata]**

Deku breathed onto his hands as he burrowed a little deeper into his blanket. He tried to walk through the grounds, feeling nostalgic from certain areas and peace in others. Around him, the world was quiet enough that he thought he could hear the snow fall.

There was a patterned crunching, before a voice spoke up. In a sound that reverberated around them, Deku's eyes dragged to the person who called out to him.

“Good morning, Deku.”

A giant man, with an orca whale’s head, came up towards him. Despite having no idea why, Deku felt like this man was familiar.

“Shouldn’t you be resting?”

Green eyes traced the man’s figure, eyes lingering on his firearms and his tense posture. There was a rifle hanging on a strap over his shoulder.

“I feel restless," he replied, his breath visible in huffs of clouds by his lips.

“...There’s some time before Lunchrush turns on the fires in the kitchen. Would you like to go on a walk with me?”

-

“Did anyone give you a tour?”

Given how much snow was still falling, it was clear that they would have to shovel these sidewalks again. He wondered where the shovels were...

Deku shrugged back, “They tried.”

“Filthy maggots can’t even give a tour,” Sakamata growled out, just a little quieter than their steps. He heave a great sigh, just as big as his own body, and pointed at the building to the left, “This was the original building. Two buildings that made up an apartment complex, back before all the monsters came in. It was really a single building with shared first two floors and then two towers separated out above, but it got destroyed and we reconstructed them like this.”

Deku arched an eyebrow, feeling as though they skipped a good portion of the story, but Sakamata shrugged back. He pointed to the area across the street. Deku wondered if it was something he would remember, or if it wasn't important to him.

“We expanded out, and some of the houses out there are our emergency area, like safehouses. If a group can't return for whatever reasons, they’re holed up in one of them. They’re usually used in case of emergencies and storage for non-essentials.”

“Like…”

“Like our armories. The workshops are there too. Things we want or need to create, of the manufacturing nature,” Sakamata clarified.

It made sense. He didn’t have any reason to think so, but he could imagine that it was because things could go wrong and explode. Or if someone is working while others are trying to rest, the noise pollution would be awful.

“It’s quiet today.”

Sakamata eyed Deku from the corner of his eye.

“Of course, they’re all routing through patrols and defenses.”

“...For patrol? Does it rotate?”

“We got some scout missions too,” he said. “When you’re out for the count, we get a little more paranoid. Everyone chips in then.”

“...That’s some security.”

Sakamata’s steps slowed down.

“Bizarre, right? Shameful, isn’t it? That we would only work overtime like this when you’re out of commission? However, that’s how it is here. So, don’t worry about anything other than resting right now.”

His words were biting, nipping at his heart like how the winter breeze did, yet it didn’t feel like Sakamata's cold tone was directed at Deku. The young man stared at him, mixed amounts of worry and concern as he regarded the whaleman.

“...Excuse me, I didn’t mean to lose myself like that," the older man dipped his head, a shallow gesture for his apology.

“Did you tell that to me because I do not remember, or did you tell me because you never had the chance to before?”

A sardonic laugh escaped his lips, escaping in huffs of air and dissipating away. Briefly, he wondered if this was how he would look in the water, bathed by blue and pockets of air floating up instead. His pinpricks of eyes narrowed dangerously.

“I suppose it would be a little bit of both. Neither of us were one for conversation and…” he looked at Deku, “You were always alone.”

Thinking of the sheer amount of people that have come up to him to talk to him, to assist him in getting around or finding comfort in this frigid weather, Deku frowned. He couldn’t believe it. Yet, he felt it in his heart. The distance that they held to him, the surprise that they had, it all spelled out a specific something.

He was used to being with people, but he wasn’t used to being with any one.

“...How many people live here?” he asked.

“We have just under 300 people,” Sakamata replied back. “That’s how many of us are here, doing this and that in order to survive.”

If there were 300 people here, and they have been here for years, and Deku had yet to find someone that he felt [familiar] with, wasn’t that too sad?

Or was it sadder for this man next to him, who had been waiting for a chance to close the distance between them?

“I’m-”

“If you’re going to apologize, then don’t. I don’t care for recognition or reward from a man who can't even remember the people that he lives with.”

Deku frowned, creasing his brow as he turned to Sakamata. His steps stopped and after a moment, the giant whale-man stopped as well. He gave a long sigh, and slowly turned back to the young man, who looked like a child next to him when he barely came up to his chest, and spoke firmly.

“I wish for your well-being and happiness. You don’t make it easy.”

“I see, so it’s my fault that you can’t achieve your goals?”

Sakamata scowled back.

“Shut up. We’re turning around to get you some food.”

Deku hummed, and supposed that change started here, “I suppose that eating well would make sure that I’m alive so I could be well and happy.”

A massive hand came to his head, rubbing his hat in a rough manner that pulled at his neck uncomfortably. This man didn’t do this often. To anyone. For the slightest of seconds, Deku wondered if this man was like him, surrounded by people and still alone.

“Were you always this cheeky?” he asked, but there was this light in his tiny eyes, and Deku didn't feel as cold anymore.

As much as it was important to remember why this man looked at him so fondly. It was equally important to make new memories as well, he supposed. He wanted to meet expectations. He wanted to be worthy of their heavy loyalty.

### **22. Last Meal - [Tenya]**

“Good morning!”

The sudden voice shattered the quiet of their morning. Deku turned to the origin of the sound, a young man greeting everyone as he jogged by them. Decked out in winter parka like everyone else but Deku apparently, he had a helmet underneath his under arm. The sight of it made mixed feelings grow inside of him.

“Morning, Iida-kun,” Sakamata said as the pair approached him.

“Good morning, Gang Orca-san!” Iida-kun replied back, and then turned to Deku. A wide grin stretched across his face, “Good morning, Deku!”

Deku stared, feeling a little embarrassed at the earnest greeting and eventually managed a quiet, “G-Good morning, Iida-kun.”

And the smile on his face fell.

“...I see,” he said quietly. He took a deep breath before he straightened himself up with a reassuring smile. “Breakfast is about to be served,” he notified them.

“You’re not coming?” Sakamata asked.

“Aniki and morning patrol is late without response, so Miruko-san and I will be heading out to see what’s going on.”

“I see, we’ve been holding you up,” the whaleman said, “Apologies.”

“No, not at all, I’m sure they just had a minor inconvenience,” Iida-kun replied back. “I’m sure that everyone will return to eat a late breakfast.” He gave a wide grin, “And I’ll be sure to eat with them when they return and face Aizawa’s lecture on practicality.”

His words inspired confidence, and Deku felt oddly touched at the thought that someone felt so assured about the state of their wayward patrol group.

He gave a sharp bow down to his waist. “Please excuse me. I hope you enjoy breakfast, Deku.”

“...I’ll eat when you all return,” Deku replied back instead, offering a small smile. “...So please return quickly, Tenya.”

Iida’s eyes widened for a moment before a wide grin bloomed across his face. He placed a motorcycle helmet over his head, clipping it on, and with his newfound energy, ran off at an impressive speed. Several barking could be heard, probably from the dogs that were watching him go, tails wagging.

“Does this happen often?” Deku asked quietly as he watched the receding figure. Did his quirk have to do with that engine-like sound coming from his legs?

“...Not with morning patrol,” Sakamata admitted slowly. “But if Miruko and Iida-kun are going, I’m sure that they won’t run into any problems on the way back. They have comms to indicate that if they ran into any problems or are in need of any assistance, both of which are unlikely.”

The younger of the two paused, because from the way that Sakamata spoke, it almost sounded like-

“Are you worried?”

“I’m worried about you,” Sakamata immediately corrected him. “Ingenium, that is, the older of the two, has a good head on his shoulders. Eight people went out this morning when it’s normally four, and we haven't shoveled the area out there. It’s bound to take a little longer. Bigger group, terrible weather circumstances.”

The thought suddenly occurred to Deku. If they died right now, he wouldn’t even know who was missing. Eight people were gone. Eight faces he wouldn’t remember. Eight people who’s place at breakfast would be gone. His heart pulled at him, in the direction of people he didn't even know the shapes of.

His side, which didn’t ache nearly as much as it did a few days ago, was nothing more than a dull throb. It hurt him but he knew that he could run, sprint, for his life. However, he could feel Sakamata’s eyes fixed on him.

“Right now, you should be focused on taking care of yourself, and don’t even think about going after them.” A hand came to grab his arm tightly, “I’m not above putting you back in the infirmary.”

He looked to where Tenya’s footprints left a trail. When he closed his eyes, he could see his smiling face with pristine clarity, a perfect memory untainted by the feeling stewing inside of him.

What a tour. It showed him exactly what he would have done, and what he can't do. Even if he went out blinding to a place he didn't recognize, and he magically found the lost patrol group in a tough state, would he be able to help them? Would he be able to bring them back alive?

The answer was a resounding no. At the same time, to remain rooted in his position felt wrong.

What did he protect, if it went out to die?

By the time he remembered, would there be anything left to protect?

These questions haunted him, even after the patrol group came back, full and whole.

### **23. Pink Carnation (I'll Never Forget You) - [Tokoyami]**

“Here.”

Deku looked up to where a crow’s head on a human body looked down at him. He stared at him for a long moment, and wondered if this was also a quirk. There were so many different types that seemed to live here. It was a little surprising to think that they had a place where everyone could be accommodated.

“...Thank you?” he replied back, taking the offered apple into his hands. He stared at it for another moment.

“Tokoyami Fumikage, at your service,” he replied back. “You’re waiting on the patrol to get back first, right? I figured that you might be hungry while you wait.”

But he wasn’t hungry at all. Probably, he wasn’t actually going to go eat. Sakamata got him some soup for breakfast, but Deku ended up not finishing it. These acts of kindness were more like an annoyance. That bitter feeling settled on his heart again. Was kindness supposed to feel so heavy?

“Do I normally?” he asked, looking at the beautiful apple in his hand. It was smaller than he thought, but he couldn’t remember any time before this where he ate apples. He just didn’t like them.

“...Not really,” Tokoyami said. “I distinctly remember people chasing you down to make sure you eat.”

“I see,” he thought about how Shigaraki swept in to make sure that he was okay, the pensive way Nine watched him eat, and tilted his head, “It must be hard to work with someone so irresponsible.”

The birdman shook his head immediately, “No, not at all. It felt more like you’ve always ate just enough to survive. I think it made it hard for some of the others.”

“Hard?”

“Yes, because you were the type of person that would be easy to forget, but if you were to ever disappear, this,” he made a motion to the area around him, “would collapse in on itself. Pivotal and essential, but never at the center of attention.”

He paused for a moment, and his quirk manifested next to him.

“Deku, we were so worried about you!” Dark Shadow said, floating right around Midoriya but not coming too close. “I’m so glad that you’re okay. This place just isn’t the same without you. For a while, it was a little scary too.”

The apple rested heavy in his hand.

“Scary?”

Tokoyami hesitated. And he looked down at his hands.

“When our quirks first returned, people were uncomfortable with Dark Shadow and I. It was hard. For a while, he thought that monsters wouldn’t get to us, but people who thought that we were monsters would,” he explained.

Briefly, he thought about Shouji, who looked different from everyone else even though he took the time to enjoy the snowfall with him.

“Gratitude doesn’t even begin to start with how I feel about you,” he continued. “To think that there was someone who could encompass the light without fearing the dark was liberating, for myself back then. I…” He exhaled, the breath expelling around his beak before disappearing. “Some people will live on, even if you don’t. And the rest will die in the warpath that they open in your name.”

From the look in Tokoyami’s eyes, Deku had an inclining feeling of which category the man next to him would count under. The burden of their loyalty, the unflinching promise to follow him even to death, pressed down on his heart.

“...I’m truly glad that you woke up, Deku.”

He took a bite of the apple, and by the time he got down to the core, he remembered that he didn’t like them.

Did he really wake up if he didn't remember anything? Wouldn't it be have been better to have died? Then, they wouldn't all be lost in this uncertain limbo.

### **24. Rosemary; Remembrance -[Misc.]**

His ongoing headache kept a muffle on everything, until he had a brief moment of clarity that made his chest twist and turn. However, there were things that he was starting to remember.

A specific set of staircases where he remembered taking a nap under. A specific angle that a door was ajar that reminded him of listening in on something he shouldn’t. A starry sky that stretched to remind him of quiet stories shared under starlight. Bits and pieces of a big picture, and when he tried to remember what that picture was, that headache swiveled back and left Deku reeling.

When he wasn’t remembering, he was otherwise trying to figure out what he wasn’t remembering.

With his condition being broadcasted to their entire base, many people made it clear that he couldn’t help out. Can’t do the dishes, can’t help mop, can’t help count inventory, can’t, can’t, can’t.

Challenging it, or just ignoring their words to do it anyways, was an option he considered, but there was something so desperate in their expression that it made Midoriya swallow his words.

And so, he was left to remember-or more likely, why he couldn’t remember.

Maybe he wasn’t supposed to remember. Maybe there was something that he had to forget. Some people made it clear that he shouldn't bother remembering. There were others that looked at him concerned, since he couldn’t meet the expectations that he couldn’t remember. It was as frustrating as it was painful. Deku did not know how to help as much as he did not remember what he did last month.

And walking by rooms, he heard it.

“How long do you think that he’ll pretend that he forgot?”

“Maybe I should pretend to lose my memories, too. Then Yaoyozuro would fawn over me.”

“Yaoyozuro? Are you kidding me? I wish Mt. Lady would volunteer to help me.”

“Enough about woman, I just want training to stop being so intense. Snipe is going to kill us.”

And Deku wondered why this felt familiar.

He wondered how this felt just as familiar as the bright smile and genuine concern that Tenya shared with him. How could those words be just as familiar as the worried expression Uraraka gave him-

“And did you see his arm?”

His eyes dropped to his arm.

“Augh, it was so disgusting. Is that what he’s been hiding this whole time?”

He knew.

Of course he knew. No one really wore shorts, given the weather, but they did bare their arms and hands when they were indoors. From the dining hall to the training rooms, Deku noticed. He noticed when they took breaks and he noticed when food was being served. When people reached to open the door for him or raised their hand to wave at him, his eyes took notice.

It was a small thing that he noticed, but his skin had been ruined, from fingertips to his chest and then some. He didn’t even realize how different, until he saw the way Stain’s eyes focused on the mess of his chest. And then, he couldn’t not notice. It was noticeably more marred than the people that he had been with. There was nothing even nor smooth.

It was an amalgamation of a desperate struggle to see the following day. It wasn’t something that he should allow other people to see, if they wanted to live peacefully. It was gross. It was frightening. It was the proof that life wasn’t as quiet as they hoped, like the guns that they carried.

Heart hardening, Deku never made that mistake again.

### **25. Zinnia; Thoughts of Friends - [Makoto]**

“Hello, Deku!”

Green eyes looked from where he was gazing at the horizon to the woman that came up to him. He gave a nod. She looked familiar, but he couldn’t quite put a name to a face.

“How are you? Is everything going okay?” she asked. And then, remembering something, snapped her fingers, “Oh, right! I’m Tsukauchi Makoto, Naomasa’s little sister. I heard nii-chan got you your planner back, but I figured that I should ask how everything is going since you got up.”

Ah, suddenly, he could see the family resemblance.

“...Everyone’s friendly,” Deku said.

“Hm?” Makoto blinked at him before a large smile overtook her face, “You know, you saved each and every single person here.” She beamed, radiant and beautiful. Briefly, he thought that in a time before their’s, she was asked to be a model plenty of times.

Deku stared at her and then back to the ground. “Do you really think that?”

She frowned back, and tilted her head thoughtfully, “What do you mean?”

“...No one here looks happy,” he said quietly. “Have they really been saved? When they look at me, it feels like they’re all desperately waiting for something. If my presence brings that out in them, did I really save them?”

Just like that, her expression melted into a somber smile. She turned to face the same outside that Deku was, as though she could feel his tension and was trying to help temper it by guiding his gaze somewhere else. Her hands clasped each other behind her back.

“...You know, I don’t mind that you lost your memories. For me, it’s almost nice. Before, you never talked to anyone and you always lived on your own. It made me a little lonely, that even though you had all these people, no one could really reach you,” she closed her eyes, as though she was remembering something specific.

When she opened her eyes to look back at Deku, he wondered what she was looking at, so that she could look simultaneously so happy and so sad at the same time. Maybe it was just a part of everyone’s apocalypse kit, to permanently affix their face with that painful look, a look that screamed that they never expected to find joy in this little pocket of the world, and it gnawed at Deku’s mind.

“And I really worried that you were sacrificing yourself for our comforts in addition to our safety.” Then, she broke out into a wide grin. “But now, you walk around and talk to people, and even let them know what you’re thinking.”

It didn’t make sense to think that their world worked like that. Still, Deku could not find the lie in her words.

“They’re upset momentarily. I think it’s because they want you to remember, but they don’t want you to go back to doing what you used to do.”

He frowned at that. “But it worked.”

“Yeah, but it felt like we were watching you die,” she said bluntly. “Don’t get me wrong, you’ve done everything for us. If you have plans, if you have something you want to do, then we’ll respect that and we’ll help you get it. We got a lot of free-spirited people here, but we’re not ungrateful. Regardless of you remembering or not, this hasn’t changed on our side.”

He hesitated.

“...Because I saved you?” he asked, feeling overwhelmed and hopelessly lost when someone gave him their heavy kindness.

“Well, that too,” she nodded back, but her smile somehow turned even brighter, “But because I think it’ll be nice to be friends.”

The word felt foreign and familiar all at once. His eyes burned and he brought his hand up to his face to scrub them.

He couldn’t get the words out. He couldn’t tell her that he felt this crippling loneliness plaguing at his heels and clawing at his chest. He didn’t know how to explain how exhausted he felt with every step he took, and how everytime he blinked, he almost wished he would never open his eyes again.

He didn’t know, and he didn’t promise anything. There was something critical that he needed to figure out first. Then, he’ll be able to give her an answer.

“It’s alright, Deku,” she said, her voice warm like sunshine. “It’s okay to take your time and do what you need to do. We’re pretty reliable when we put our mind into it. ”

He wondered what had to happen, for all these people to look at him with such warmth. At the same time, he wondered why he felt so undeserving of it.

### **26. Yellow Tulip; Hopeless Love [Spinner + Twice]**

That unsettling feeling had made a home in his heart, and more than anything else, it was starting to annoy him. Deku stared a little longer, out to a place he couldn’t remember the name of, just a little but further than the horizon. His fingers itched, his weight continued to pass between his feet. His scars itched, and he felt a pull.

No point in sitting idle then, he decided, getting to his feet. He’ll go out on a walk.

-

Deku was trying to go out on a walk. In the time it took for him to wear the clothes that Miruko promised (and they weren’t comfortable to wear, but brought comfort to him instead. It felt as strange as it probably sounded), and he made it outside to the edge of the compound, word had gotten around base.

At some point, they had translated his words and actions from “going on a walk” to “going on patrol.”

Which was, first of all, wrong. How was he going to patrol when he got lost going from one building to the next? And then, his second thought came just a fraction of a second later.

He thought that word traveled fast around the base, but holy shit did word travel fast. Didn’t they have anything better to do than observe the resident amnesiac? Surely, this many people would have better things to do and expend their energy on that and this, right? They bordered between civilization and apocalypse, right? There must be a thousand and one things to do.

About eight different people pulled him to the side to explain how to use a walkie-talkie, some of which didn’t bother introducing themselves. The conversation usually started with "this is a walkie, press this to speak" and ended with them repeatedly mentioning how essential it was to speak into the walkie, especially if someone called him.

After the third time they did it, he stopped thinking it was amusing.

He wasn’t going to be out long. Truly. He wasn’t going to go out and just, find trouble, no matter how much Aizawa eyed him like that, and he really, really, really wasn’t going to go further than a few buildings. A literal walk. Just around the outside. That’s it. He would be back within twenty minutes, max. He didn’t understand the frazzled gaze from Kaminari or the worried gaze from Ojiro.

"So, where to, bossman?"

Deku paused, and slowly turned to Twice, eyebrow arched.

"...Shouldn't... I be asking that?" he asked quietly.

The man looked at him and scoffed.

"You really want me to believe that, if we ask you to go somewhere, you will?"

Both of Deku's eyebrows raised this time.

"Yes?" he tried, but somehow, it sounded like a lie.

Next to him, as though he told him the Joke of the Century, Twice bent over and laughed long and loud. He slapped his knee for good measure. Deku worried for them.

"What's up?" a lizardman asked, coming up next to them as he adjusted the straps on his backpack and his gun holster.

"He just asked me where we were going to go!" Twice laughed, the sound reverberated around them. Somehow, it did little to help Deku find humor in the situation. He supposed that he should be glad that this man could laugh about something. "// I'll kill you if you come too close, Spinner!"

Spinner heaved a long sigh at the blond, and turned to Deku. He returned Deku’s confused expression with an amused one.

"Even if we choose, you're not the type to follow," he said. Despite how annoying that should be, he just looked incredibly fond. "It’s fine, we can keep up now, so go do what you want."

"...That sounds counter-intuitive.”

Spinner shrugged back, "It works." He leaned to the left and then the right, as though testing his weight in his shoes before he pulled his boot up to tug at one of the daggers he tucked into it. Straightening out, he met Deku's eyes. "Is everything okay?”

"...Are you... ready?"

"You’re waiting if I'm ready?"

Deku looked at Spinner, then to Twice (who wasn't laughing as hard but giggling more than Deku thought the situation called for) and then back to the taller man. He gave a curt nod, and the lizardman’s jaw unhinged. After a moment of spluttering, he pulled himself back together. The look in his eyes was inquisitive, but Deku didn’t get why.

“... I’m sorry to make you wait, then.”

It sounded sarcastic, but that look in his eyes wasn’t.

It was times like this where Deku was almost scared to remember what happened before. Why did he do the things that he did? What did he do, so often, so that the people around him acted like this? From the sound of things, he kept to himself in the most extreme of ways. It sounded like he wasn’t above leaving people in the dust, for no reason other than his own personal convenience. At the same time, he doesn't believe that, because he felt so close to the people around him. The contradiction twisted his heart into a knot, leaving him confused and a little annoyed.

"Alright then, where to?"

He stared at him blankly.

"...You got any... ideas on where you want to go?" Twice tried, "//Let’s go kill something!"

Deku hesitated, but both men were surprisingly patient. They looked at him, waiting for an answer without making faces or extra comments. Eventually, Deku found his words.

“I just want to go on a walk, maybe around the block?”

He wasn’t barely armed. In front of him, Twice had a hunting rifle across his back and he was strapping a few extra bullets into his side pocket. Spinner had two handguns and several knives of all shapes and sizes on his person. He didn’t think it was that dangerous, since the patrol groups mentioned that the numbers of monsters were dwindling. Their delays were weather-based.

“Is it, uhm, dangerous?” Deku couldn’t help but ask, eyeing the others who were preparing to leave as well. Did a walk need this many people?

“Huh? Uh, if it’s really a block, it should be okay,” Twice said.

He hesitated for another second before he found his words. “...Everyone but me is armed with a firearm,” Deku said, “Do I… need to be as well…?” he trailed off. He felt stupid for asking, like it was strange for him to have a firearm as well. Still, their current state had him concerned.

“Don’t worry about it,” Spinner said. He motioned at his weapon, “This is more for us. Most of us just use our quirks to get out of trouble anyways.”

“...Do I have a quirk?”

Spinner and Twice exchanged a look, eyebrows hiked up on their heads before Spinner responded with a confused, “Yes?”

Deku looked at his hands, and wondered why that felt like a lie.

“You haven’t been able to use your quirk?” Spinner asked. “Well, I suppose that makes sense, concerning that you’re still recovering.” And maybe there was something panicked about the expression on Deku’s face, because he quickly added, “Well, it’s not like you were the type to use your quirk on base either.”

But if he had a quirk, what the fuck was it? The question lodged in his throat.

“Does it matter?” the blond asked, tilting his head. “If you can’t use it at the moment, it’s fine.” Twice stepped closer to the young man, and dramatically pointed at himself with his thumb. “We won’t let anything happen to you, no matter what happens to us. //Yeah, we’ll put your head on a stick and parade it around town!”

The lizardman hand came up to massage his temples. “Twice, no,” he sighed.

“What?”

Deku shook his head. “You should put yourself first,” he gently chided. “Saving someone at the price of your own life isn’t saving someone, it’s burdening them.”

The blond stilled for a moment, his arms dropping to his side.

“Oh, uh… sorry then,” he said, a little airy as he tried to find stable footing. “Then, I’ll save your life and mine too. // A double suicide!”

Green eyes widened as his hands came to his lips. He didn’t understand why he said that, when he couldn’t remember where he had gotten those words. It felt dirty, coming out of his mouth like that, and he could tell that it wasn’t something he said often, if the expression that Spinner was giving him was any indication.

His head started to throb, and he wondered if he was getting close to the truth.

“Maybe you shouldn’t go out,” the man said quietly. A scaley hand reached out for him.

“No, I… I’ll be fine,” Deku said, “It won’t get better just because I run from it.”

The extended arm stilled before it dropped down.

“...Alright,” he said, his voice as devoid of emotions as his expression. “Then let’s go.”

If Deku remembered, would he also know how to stop hurting the people who wanted to help him?

### **27. Love You For A Lifetime - [Yamada + Enji]**

After a really intense battle of rock-paper-scissors, two people would be acting as Deku’s guards. Further behind, Spinner, Twice and a few others that Deku didn’t know the name of but were very polite to him, were spread out to scout and the likes.

Which, since it was a fucking walk around the block, felt like overkill.

“Ta-da! Your resident Present Mic here will be here to be your personal MC of the evening!” a blond with an impressive bun on the back of his head announced. “How are you feeling, Listener?!”

Deku blinked and nodded. The loud noise, and the piercing focus, had his stomach in knots. Eventually, he remembered to answer. “Yes.”

“Whoaa! An answer that didn’t answer the question! As expected of Deku!” he said with a wide grin. He turned back and quieted down, “Well, I suppose it’s time for introductions, hm? I’m Yamada Hizashi. You remember Shota?” Deku didn’t know how he could ever forget, “I’ve been his one and only friend since middle school!”

He nodded again. He felt at ease, with how much this man was talking. The silence didn’t feel oppressive, and with his energy, it was easy to be pulled along by his energy.

“But that’s not important or anything. I just wanted to brag!”

He walked slowly as he talked, and Deku wondered if they did this often. It felt like the blond matched his pace considerably well.

"And if you hear anyone saying to meet back up to our rendezvous point," Yamada explained as they passed a streetlamp. He took a moment to stand next to it proudly, even going as far to give it some jazz-hands before he straightened up. "There’s a few streetlamps like this."

"Streetlamps?"

"Yeah,” he pointed at the top, “the streetlamp here is tall and has a giant ribbon on the top, it'll be easy to find as a landmark. Then, even if you're lost, you'll be able to find your way back. They got some cameras and a way to signal back to base," he said, pointing at a little receiver box on the lamp, “so someone will get you.”

Deku, who was more or less used to the fact that everyone assumed that he would break rank and wander away like some lost little lamb, looked up to stare at the dirty red ribbon that sat at the top of the streetlamp. It looked like it used to be a part of a Christmas decoration, from a long, long time ago.

"Why would I get lost?" he asked.

"Oh, do you remember this place?" the blond asked.

Deku looked around and pointed at a huge and imposing man behind him. "Isn't he coming?"

Said man, as though sensing that someone was talking about him, looked up. Seeing that Deku was pointing at him, he stalked his way over, his expression thunderous. His lips pulled down, bordering between a snarl and frown, and eyebrows furrowed. It looked like he was nervous, maybe a little concerned about something, but it made Yamada's back go ramrod straight. He brought his hands in front of his chest in a placating gesture.

“E-Endeavor-san! You’re so intense!” Yamada yelled back.

"What."

When Endeavor asked about something, it did not sound like a question. Deku always admired that about this man.

Always. What a strange notion to have about someone he couldn't remember anything about.

"Are you coming with me?" Deku asked.

The blond looked nervously between the two, but the young man couldn't figure out why.

Endeavor, however, arched an eyebrow at him. Unimpressed. He crossed his massive, tree-trunk thick arms across his even bigger chest.

"That was the idea," he said.

Deku nodded and turned to Yamada, "Then, I won't get lost."

The words sank in deeply, and the confusion on Endeavor’s face melted into something that looked painful. On the other side, Yamada's expression was hidden as he covered his face with his hands.

"...That's good," the blond said, but he managed to give a tired smile at them. He scratched the back of his head, “Am I … just roadkill to you or something?”

Deku shook his head, “I don’t really know how to explain it,” he said, placing his hand over his heart as the dull pang in his head pounded a little louder, “but I don’t think I’ll get lost with him.”

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“...This feels like overkill for just a walk,” Deku eventually admitted. “And I’m sure you’re busy too.”

“Taking a break every now and then won’t kill me,” Endeavor replied back. “And this place isn’t so weak that it’ll collapse if we both take a break.”

“That’s good,” the young man agreed. “So even if I die, it’ll be fine.”

Maybe it would have been better. He would die, and he wouldn’t need to do all the mental gymnastics to keep his wits about him. And no one would be so disappointed when he didn’t live up to their expectations.

Endeavor’s steps stopped. A few paces after, Deku stopped too. He had to turn around so that he could see the man’s face.

“I don’t know,” the older man said.

The young man tilted his head, slightly confused.

“Excuse me?”

“If you die, whatever managed to do you in is coming for the rest of us,” the older man replied back, slowly, “And I don’t think many of us will be level-headed enough to adjust to a world without you.”

“That’s… a lot of faith,” he said quietly.

“Before society collapsed, I was a hero. I burned for the sake of a better tomorrow. When those monsters first tore into the world, I thought I had lost everything.” He spoke firmly, his voice echoing in the silence of the street. “And then, you showed up.”

His steps slowed to a stop. Deku’s did too, once he realized that the man stopped walking next to him. He turned around, eyes wide and Endeavor smiled back.

“My fire returned because of you,” the older man said, like he said it a hundred times before and he’ll say it a hundred more times. As though to demonstrate, he lifted his hand up, where a small, candle-sized fire danced above his index finger. A loose grin began to tug from the corner of his lips. “So I always thought that I would expend all of it for you. As long as I can burn, I will. Your memories of it has nothing to do with it.”

The world that Enji saw was something that Deku would like to see.

“...Deku, you said that you wouldn’t get lost because I am here,” he ignited some fire on his hand, before he closed it into a fist. The fire extinguished, and a pair of summer blue eyes met his, “but it’s actually the other way around.”

Deku lost his words as Enji dipped his head just a few inches forward.

“I pray for your full recovery.”

The charming smile that tilted his lips made Deku feel as though he was back in front of that fireplace, a cup of hot chocolate in his hands As the winter chill melted away.

“Heeeyyy,” Yamada called out weaky as he ran back to them, he probably kept moving forward when they stopped to chat, “...did you guys seriously forget me?”

“Sorry about that, Hisashi,” Deku replied. “Please, lead the way.”

“There’s not much left, if we’re really going around the block,” Yamada complained as he stepped towards them. He looked to Enji and then back to Deku, before he started to grin again, “It’s good to see you smile though.” Yamada took a deep breath, and pointed forward. “C’mon, let’s get to the park, and then we can head back. I’m sure the others don’t mind waiting a little more!” he continued on, already turning back down the street with an exuberance that seemed to melt the snow around them.

Deku smiled back, the type of smile that he couldn’t quite stop even though his facial muscles started to hurt.

### **28. Black Rose; Death - [Yagi]**

“Deku, welcome back. Sorry to dump this on you, but can you come with me?”

Deku nodded as he waved at the older man. Despite looking only to be in his mid-thirties, Enji and Yamada gave him polite bows as they walked by. With a quick greeting, they left.

“Hello,” he said, as he nodded his head. “I don’t mind.”

“Great, come along with me. I wanted to introduce you to someone again. You haven’t been able to make headway with your quirk, right? We think that this is going to help. Even if you don’t remember our names and faces, you’ll need to remember how to use your quirk.”

The young man nodded again. He couldn’t even remember what his quirk was, or what it could do. In all honesty, just hearing the word ‘quirk’ made his stomach turn. His headache started to throb from the side of his head. A dull ache like someone was taking slow and heavy steps across his skull.

“Ah, right, you probably forgot. But I’m Torino Sorahiko,” he said. “I was one of the ones that helped coach you through your quirk when you got it. Due to reasons,” he motioned at himself, “I look like this, but I’m going to be spending my 90th birthday soon.”

Deku choked. Quirks were an amazing thing.

“Oh, Toshinori, there you are,” Gran Torino said, waving his hand down the hallway. “Come here and talk to him.”

Deku turned his head, and saw Yagi.

Yagi was tall and imposing. He was a true muscle house, albeit thinner than Endeavor and Mirio, but much thicker than Spinner and Ojiro. He might have been bigger, but he was scrunched up and hiding behind the corner of the hallway. His eyes darted from the wall to the floor, looking as though he wanted to curl in on himself and disappear.

Shocking blue eyes met his.

“...All Might?” Deku rolled the word in his mouth.

Suddenly, he felt a bolt of lightning run through his body, paralyzing him. A white-shock of pain ran through his entire brain and he suddenly choked. When he coughed, something wet splattered on the ground. His entire vision, blurring and darkening around the corners, began to tint in red, as though he was looking through a red window.

The distinct taste of metal painted the surface of his mouth. His hand came up to his mouth to catch whatever it was that was coming out of his mouth. He looked back at Toshinori, who rushed forward to catch him. His mouth was open, but if he was saying something, Deku couldn’t hear him.

Someone’s arms wrapped around him. At the sight of those eyes, he remembered.

He remembered and tried to open his mouth to tell him that he was okay. He was fine and Yagi, the Hero that Deku idolized as a child, did not need to worry about him, because he remembered.

This would not kill him. He would not die from this. If he could die from something like this, he was certain that he would have died long ago.

He hoped that Yagi would remember that too. He didn’t need to worry about Deku, for Deku was durable. And so, Deku would be fine.

He didn’t need to make that kind of face. Please, All Might, that’s not the face that the Symbol of Peace should be-

### **29. Sky Blue - [Chisaki]**

“Good morning everyone! Looks like we’re in for a nice day today, too! The current temperature reads as two degrees, but the sun is bright and shining! The snow might melt a little, but it’s definitely going to freeze overnight! If you’re lacking in clothes or equipment, make sure you...”

Deku’s eyes opened to the sound of Yamada’s voice broadcasting across the base. Slowly, he sat up. Pain jolted his every move, as though his body replaced all the blood in his system with pain instead.

The events of the last few days suddenly caught up to him and he rubbed his face. What a mess. He better go find everyone that he bothered and properly apologize. He swung his legs over to the side of the bed. The yukata he was in had been changed out. They must have cleaned him up too. What an embarrassment he was.

At the very least, he was alone right now.

Just as he thought that, the door opened, and Chisaki walked in without knocking. As expected of a man who didn’t care about his patient’s comforts. Deku can’t believe he missed this.

The normally impeccably looking man looked ragged, as though he was too busy and tired to even look in the mirror. He ran his hand through his hair, as though suddenly remembering that his hair was a mess, but didn’t use his quirk.

He must be even more tired than Deku thought.

“You made a mess of the hallway out there,” was the first thing out of his mouth. Good old, Chisaki. Looks like he didn’t miss anything at all. “It’s all cleaned up though. You’ve been out for two days.”

Deku nodded as he got to his feet. Chisaki jerked forward, as though he wanted to help him in case he fell, but Deku remembered. The man instead stayed in that uncomfortable looking position, as Deku leaned away from him.

This pain was nothing because it was him, and he was nothing. No worries here. No need for extra care. It was clear that he had indulged in far too much in the last few days. That kindness was wasted on him, but he wouldn’t forget it.

The young man gave a polite bow to him.

“Sorry for the trouble, Kai.”

“No, don’t apologize,” the man replied back, a dark shadow crossing over his eyes. “Not when we’re the reason why you lost your memories in the first place.”

He shook his head, but didn’t say anything more. He peered around Chisaki to the door, clear in his intent.

“...You remember, then?”

He raised his eyebrow, as though to ask, “What do you think?”

The man sighed back.

“...I see,” he said. “It’s a shame, since I really wanted to see you then.” He stepped aside, and Deku walked through the door, ignoring him.

There were things that he needed to do. If Yamada was doing morning announcements, then that meant that he already missed the sunrise-patrol. He hoped that Stain was wandering around the base so they could spar. His body felt stiff. Two days of sleep would do that to a person, he supposed. He should get something to eat before Taishiro, or worse, Tenya, caught him.

Certainly, Deku knew that there were a thousand other things that he had forgotten or hadn’t thought of yet. He still couldn’t remember his name aside for [Deku] and really, that just felt like a curse. He couldn’t remember what he was really doing before the end of society. Some of those things will come back and others have probably been lost to the sands of forever. But he remembered enough.

He can’t see out of his right-eye. He remembered why now. The man behind him was Chisaki, and he was in charge of the worst-injuries and accidents that didn’t relate to monsters. Things like that.

“You know,” Chisaki spoke up, shattering the silence and breaking through his thoughts, as his hand touched the doorknob. “I enjoy my time with you,” he said. “It’s okay if you enjoy moments too.”

Deku’s steps paused but he didn’t turn back. Good, he couldn’t say. He was honestly glad that Chisaki enjoyed it. That was fine. That was good. Chisaki struck him as the kind of person that never enjoyed anything, or got to enjoy anything in his life, so at least he had this.

But Deku couldn’t. He didn’t deserve it. He couldn’t afford to. Different reason, but it all led to the same conclusion.

He didn’t have the luxury to enjoy himself. He didn’t deserve it. He didn’t really remember why he didn’t deserve it, but it felt so far engrained inside of him that it felt wrong to even dream of being happy. These last few days were like a dream, unattainable and unreal. It felt like someone else was in his body, and he got to watch and observe himself interact with others in a sloppy way.

He needed to focus on other things. The people next to him have forgiven him for forgetting, and they are almost excited to see tomorrow with him. Deku hadn’t forgotten that. The kindness he wrongly received here, that he greedily consumed, was wonderful for someone as fundamentally rotten as him.

And still, he wanted to meet that expectation.

He stepped forward without answering Chisaki instead. He had to go make his rounds, apologize for his ungrateful behavior these last few days, and get to work.

### **30. Memories**

“Ah, Deku-shounen, you’re awake!”

Deku gave a curt nod.

“...Oh, you remember then?”

He gave a deep bow, bending at his waist, “I’m sorry for my previous behavior. It will not happen again.”

A hand came down onto his shoulder, and he relaxed against the touch. He felt a small tug, and pulled himself up straight. Yagi leaned down a little, a big grin on his face and bright blue eyes staring at him from underneath a shadow.

“No need to apologize. We are your support as much as you have been ours,” he said. “There’s no wrong in lending assistance, as there is no wrong in receiving it.”

Deku basked under the warm words, even though he didn’t deserve them.

“Toshinori-san,” he said quietly, his voice crushed under the weight of knowing what the right thing to do was.

Even a child could explain it. That bad people deserved all the bad things that happened to them, and then some. He knew. He thought that when he was a child too.

He had a fulfilling childhood, a full life, there was no excuse for him. He never suffered before. His life wasn’t particularly hard. He didn’t go hungry. He wasn’t homeless. He wasn’t wronged. There was nothing wrong in his life. And still, he chose the life that he led.

“Deku-shounen,” Yagi continued, both of his massive hands coming onto his thin ones. They pressed down on old wounds and aches, but Deku didn’t flinch. “Enjoying life doesn’t mean you have forgotten the past. It could also mean that you are healing. There is nothing wrong with that.”

Green eyes widened at the statement. He felt like these were important words. If he had heard them before, at the time where his life felt most turbulent, he might have even found peace.

“These last few days, were they really so bad?”

They were wonderful, Deku couldn’t bring himself to say. But he knew better than to think that he deserved them.

The words lodged in his throat, where they were caught because Deku had just enough shame. He had enough shame to not admit to those perverse thoughts aloud.

He would hold these memories close to his heart, far away from where anyone else may pry. Even if they disappeared one day, that would be fine. The feelings would remain. The warmth and the rage and the kindness and the hate will cradle his weak and pitiful heart.

These memories will surely accompany him all the way to hell.

### Alt:

### **24. Rosemary; Remembrance -[Misc. & Miruko + Compress]**

While looking for a pair of gloves, a voice came from above.

Deku turned his head, craning it until he looked around the upstairs railing. A woman with tall rabbit ears and an even taller and longer man stood there. Grabbing the top part of the railing, she vaulted over and dropped down in front of him. Just to double-check, Deku turned to confirm that the staircase was literally ten feet away. Was the… jumping necessary?

“What are you looking for?” she demanded.

“My goodness,” the long man dropped down as well. He stood up with much more grace and elegance than Miruko, like he was a swan gracing the earth.

Vaguely, Deku wondered if the stairs were a suggestion or something because everyone treated them as such. Were they bored or something?

“What a wonderful coincidence, to be given the opportunity to meet you like this, Deku-san.”

Deku nodded at him, peering at the man with the top hat before looking back at Miruko’s fluffy ears. Catching his gaze, she tilted her head and gave a wide grin.

“Rumi,” she said. “You call me Rumi.” She pointed at the man next to her, “And that’s Mister.”

“That is, Atsuhiro Sako, Mr. Compress, at your service,” Compress said, swinging his hat off his head as he gave an extravagant bow. Placing his hat back onto his head, back straight, he gave an award-winning smile, “Please, call me Sako-”

“Yeah, whatever,” Miruko cut him off. “What are you looking for?”

Deku blinked at her, and then looked back down. Without meaning to, his eyes caught on Miruko’s wrist, where a thin line ran across the back of her hands. The skin looked slightly different from each other, as though parts of his skin was healing at different rates as others, but it looked to all be an even shade, which wasn’t what Deku could say about himself.

“Does it hurt?” he asked quietly.

Miruko lifted her hand up. “This?”

“Well, if you could believe it, it used to look worse,” Compress said. “Just a patchwork mess, not as bad as Dabi and that purple patchwork mess. Truly terrible. It was from Before, right?”

Before, Deku assumed, meaning the time before the monsters came and they all ended up here. He thought back to the white-haired Dabi and his crooked smile, and tried to recall something he didn’t remember.

Miruko shrugged back, a welcome distraction. “We got some healers here. And that Chisaki could make it look like it never happened, but I didn’t need that. It didn’t really hurt. Just itched sometimes.” Her eyes landed back on Deku’s face, looking for something (or perhaps someone). “Not that big of a deal.”

And she hesitated, which looked strange, before she closed the distance between them. It took less than two steps, but Deku could feel time slow down. The snow around them slowed down from melting, as though to help preserve this scene.

“...This scar, do you remember it?” Miruko asked, pointing to a place at the junction of his arm.

Deku looked down, to where he was missing a chunk of flesh on his bicep. He hadn’t gotten a chance to really change his clothes, so it was visible for anyone to see. Frankly, he didn’t even notice this scar particularly over the others. The skin grew back over it in an overlapping clash of uneven ridges. It was as ugly as it sounded, and he moved his free hand over it to hide it from piercing red eyes. It was bigger than his palm, and he barely managed to hide the valley it made.

He shook his head to answer the question. He didn’t remember. It felt recent, if only because he could feel the skin pull when he used it.

“...Yeah,” Miruko said, her twisted grin looking to be all teeth and no humor. “Neither do I."

Compress took his jacket off and rested it over Deku’s shoulders. “Come now,” he said, “This isn’t a conversation to have while we’re out here.”

Deku took the jacket and peered up at him. His breath came out in puffs.

“I’m looking for some gloves,” he said quietly.

Both adults paused for a second and Miruko closed her eyes. She took a deep breath.

“Alright,” she said, “I think your stuff should be fixed up. I’ll bring it to the infirmary. Mister, keep an eye on our boss, okay?”

“But of course, Miruko. I wish you the best of luck.”

Miruko, the name echoed in his head. Not Rumi. The thought buried itself as fast as it came, as the rest of the words sank into him.

Why would he need some luck? Were they short on gloves? They had ample food, running water and electricity but they didn’t have some fucking gloves? He thought to the girl who made handwarmers with her quirk, but couldn’t find the words.

Was he undeserving of it?

“Don’t look at me like that,” Miruko said, “You have a set. You always use them. I figured that it’s what you want, right? Jeanist was patching it up. I’ll get it to you after I pry it out of his hands.”

Was Jeanist particularly hard to deal with?

Mr. Compress laughed when he asked that question.

“Oh, no, not him,” he said, pointing at Miruko, “She’s the problem.”

Miruko scowled. “Shut up. It’s a good thing that he doesn’t remember.”

And perhaps, if Deku remembered, he would know what they were referencing. Would he be chortling with them then? It made him wonder how many other instances, and how many other people, he had forgotten from then to now.

The laughter he could not join in on felt lonely.