housekeeping:

* Introductions from UA-Heroes/students and most major pros & their families
* Including the Apple-Picking & Hospital Run & Springer Fight
* ending with fighting Kouta + Muscular
* and his face coming out

## Summer

### **Summertime: Equipment**

“But man, that’s pretty fucking manly too,” Kirishima said, gesturing to Helmet. He wiped the sweat off his chin as he eyed the founder, “This kind of heat and he’s still in that helmet.”

“...Helmet...san?”

They all paused as Ojiro approached the man, despite standing several feet away, it was clear to see how much taller Ojiro was than him. Nearly a head and a half smaller than them, but they didn’t know how to approach the man who saved them.

“Uh,” Ojiro started, “Would you… like some water? It’s a very hot day.”

Helmet turned his head towards the young man and then faced forward again. He walked away, as though Ojiro didn’t even say anything at all.

“Ouch,” Kaminari winced.

“Ooooh a cold front in the middle of summer,” Ashida winced back sympathetically.

“...He’s going to get a heat-stroke,” Shouji frowned back.

“Him? No way, he probably knows what he needs to do.”

-

Little did they know, Deku was so hot he felt like he was melting. He felt like his mind was being taken out of his body and floating around in space. Since there was no A/C working in his fourth-floor apartment complex, and he spent all his time outside hunting down things to kill, there was little to no opportunity to cool down.

And now, he couldn’t take off his helmet anywhere since someone was always with him.

Sweating bullets under the helmet, feeling as though he was baking alive, Deku continued to swing. Skull splattered and shattered outwards. The spray of blood and brain matter painted the ground and wall. Deku took a step back, dodging one hit and spinning into his next one.

Bodies decompose faster during the summer, and some times, it felt like the stench would never leave him. If he stayed out, if he kept fighting, would he decompose before he died? On occasion, he felt like he wouldn’t even notice when he died.

Well, thoughts like that didn’t matter. If there was something to beat in front of him, then he wouldn’t.

### **Eri**

Deku swears that he’s melting. Underneath his helmet and his masks, he was sweating so much that his clothes were soaked through and heavier than they needed to be. He caught a glimpse of Twice lifting his shirt up to wipe at the sweat gathering at his chin and momentarily felt a rush of jealousy and anger.

He quickly averted his eyes, and felt shame fill in for where that surge of emotions came. He didn’t know how, but he always managed to be surprised at how disgusting of a human being he could be.

Jealous of someone when he made his own decision to cover up?

He shook his head, as though to shake the thoughts out of his head. He knew better than to be distracted. He can’t get lazy.

It was that very focus that caught onto the Quiet around him. It was rare for it to ever be this quiet.

He lifted his hand, signalling to the others to pause and take caution. They stopped and quieted down in an instant, and he closed his eyes.

It’s not that it was quiet, but that he was too far away from the Sound.

In an instant, he heard something and ran for it.

-

At the height of summertime, Helmet came running into the compound with a tiny girl in his arms. His bat and backpack were being held by Hawks, and Shigaraki was wheezing about a block back.

The girl, small and little, can’t find any words to speak but her little fingers clenched tightly to Helmet’s sleeve like it’s a lifeline. For her, it probably was. The blood on him stained her dirty clothes, making them stick to each other, and she’s running a fever. Or maybe it was just that hot. He didn’t know.

He didn’t put her down until he got into a room though.

### **Powdered Milk**

Today was a little different.

Today, Helmet suddenly appeared in the kitchen. In the time it took Lunchrush to sprint to the kitchen with a frying pan, however, he had placed a bag of boxes on the table.

Curious, Natsuo poked through the box.

“...Powdered milk?” he questioned. He tilted his head to the side, and suddenly remembering their newest, youngest resident, snapped his fingers. “Oh, for Eri-chan?”

Helmet gave him a polite bow, and deciding that the conversation was over, left.

“Wait…” Lunchrush said quietly after him, “Don’t you wanna… eat something…”

He sighed, his arms falling to his sides. He turned to the boxes of powdered milk. Knowing Helmet, he wouldn’t be shocked if there were more in the back or whatever, but if he gave this much right now… wasn’t it because he trusted them with it?

### **Enter: Best Jeanist**

Seeing survivors is a strange thing.

The last group he was a part of were the last batch of people that he had seen. It’s been… four days? Four weeks? It couldn’t have been four years. But honestly, Hakamata was just tired. Did it matter how many days had passed?

But he could hear laughter. It was a bright sound that he hadn’t heard in a very, very long time. It was such a hopeful sound that Hakamata thought he was dead. Where else could such a sweet sound ring other than in the embrace of death?

These days, it didn’t sound so bad.

The worst thing about being a hero was when someone looked at you with Those Eyes. It wasn’t anger or resentment for not protecting their loved ones, but the expectant gaze they have for a Hero to choose them. Time and time again, they’ll turn against each other, no matter how well they worked together before that.

And Hakamata didn’t know how to save the people he saved from each other.

So, Hakamata thought that it was okay to close his eyes and take a break.

-

Hawks stood there for a moment, looking left then right over the destruction. His feathers were out and about, trying to check every nook and cranny, but when he opened his mouth, he had nothing to say.

What could he say? “Hey, Helmet, if you’re alive, wave.”

Hawks didn’t even know his name. The best he got was a nickname they gave him that he never responded to. Hell, for all he knows, he wasn’t even a man.

So here he was, uselessly standing around with a growing amount of anxiety chaining his heart, as he lost himself. Helmet wasn’t dead. He couldn’t be dead. He was just quiet and that’s all Hawks could hold onto.

He didn’t know what he would do, if the first and only time he ever saw Helmet’s face would be the day that he died.

It felt like someone was extinguishing each and every single one of those strings lights that once guided him through the darkest nights.

-

Toga could say with certainty that she never expected to ever touch Best Jeanist. Not that she minded. He was a very attractive man, especially since he was splattered in blood and all, but she never really thought that she could be carrying his legs while Twice grabbed his arms, as they ran back for the base.

“W-wait,” the blond gasped, “H-he’s alone back there-”

“Helmet is pro at this!” Twice said.

“But he wanted to help you so we’re going to help you,” Toga said, a big grin on her face, “So don’t die, okay?”

Was this a blessing or a curse? No one would know.

Eventually, Hawks came sweeping down, taking Best Jeanist from them with an easy smile. It was probably better for him to be carried away on the feathers than be half-dragged by Toga and Twice.

But it was hard to bite back on the bitter feeling that a hero took this from them. It was a sharp pinch in their gut when Helmet eventually came back to base, and Hawks landed next to him to explain what had happened to Best Jeanist.

It brought them a little glee (relief) that Helmet just walked by him like it didn’t matter to him, but it wasn’t like it didn’t bother them. For a brief moment, that gut-curling fear that the society that shunned them would return settled into their heart. The feeling of waiting for Helmet, day after day, with the uncertainty if he would ever return, haunted them.

### Best Jeanist - welcome

Hakamata stared for a long moment before he slowly nodded.

“I’m glad that… something survived,” he admitted.

Sitting in a chair next to his bed, Tsukauchi pursed his lips.

“You as well,” he said, his voice gentle but firm, “I am glad that you made it.”

The former hero shook his head, “I’m not sure about that,” he said. “Even the strongest denim will tear under strain.”

### Chisaki Joins Up Again

“...Of course you came to save me again,” Chisaki said, breathless as his eyes focused in on the man in a helmet in front of him.

“Hey there,” Former Number Three Pro Hero suddenly descended in front of them, wings fluttering before they closed against his back as he landed in front of them, “Is this all of you?”

Chisaki gave a curt nod, “Yes, thank you for the assistance." His eyes trailed to Helmet, who turned to face off the oncoming horde of Walkers. The man didn't even turn to him or look at him. He made no motion to even acknowledge his or his men's existence.

“Yeah, he does that,” Hawks said, sending his feathers out to various Walkers’ pockets and yanking out wallets, keycards, and bags off of them. "Don't get offended, he's just a quiet guy. He was the one that found you."

Another man came up to them. He sighed, rubbing the back of his neck as he inspected the area in front of them. In the meanwhile, Helmet was making quick work of the Walkers in front of him, spinning with his bats with an expertise that could only come from experience. For Kurono, who had seen him fight before, it felt like he had learned some grace to back up his heavy hits.

“What a pain,” the man with ashen-blue hair said. He pulled off one of his gloves. “Get me some cover,” he said. His hand reached for the Walkers that extended their arms to him, and by simply batting their hands away, disintegrated them into nothing.

“Helmet, Shigaraki and I got it from here, get out of here!”

"Don't call me so familiarly," Shigaraki called out, narrowing his eyes at the hero. Hawks waved him off with a lazy smile in return.

The man in the Helmet, and who would have thought he could feel such relief at seeing a familiar stranger, tapped the back of his heel with his bat before swinging it up. He gave a wave to the people behind him without turning around before he dropped his bat and started to sprint. He weaved between Walkers with ease that could only come from someone with such a small statue, and jumped up to land on Walkers that bent down to get onto him. He flipped over one, used another as a springboard, grabbed one of the walls and scrambled up.

“He got some new moves too,” Kurono noted.

“And some new friends,” Chisaki said, eyeing how another Pro-Hero stood up on the wall. Kamui Woods, was it?

Helmet scurried off then and Hawks frowned.

“...Are you sure there’s just you?"

“Yes, all present,” Chisaki said, beginning to frown, “Is there something wrong?”

“...Damn, I guess we found two groups in one,” he took a step back, “Hey, Helmet’s got something!”

“On it!” A lizard man called back, scaling the walls. Hawks took a moment to toss a feather onto the man as he ran right past them before turning to the fight in front of him.

Feathers brought him the wallets, purses, and cell phones towards him as the man with decay on his hands dissipated the remains in front of him.

“45 total,” Hawks said, counting up the ID’s.

“...I touched 53,” the other man said. He wiped at his chin, probably tired and a little strained after using his quirk so much, and the two sighed back.

“Well, nothing we can do about it now, I’ll explain it to him,” Hawks said, calling the rest of his feathers back. He collected the rest of the ID’s out, and left everything else into a pile of trash on the ground. He looked back at Chisaki and the group, “...Let’s get you back,” he said.

“Are you guys still at the Apartment Complex?” the former yakuza asked.

Shigaraki and Hawks exchanged a look before they turned back.

“...You were here before?”

Chisaki nodded, “Saved by Helmet over there. I went back to get my group and my daughter. I’m glad that he’s still alive,” he said with a calm that didn’t fit a survivor. “Now, I can properly repay my debt to him.”

“Yeah,” Shigaraki growled out, “Good luck with that.” He turned on his heel and sighed, “Let’s get out of here.”

Hawks looked around their group and a little cautiously asked, "...A girl named Eri?"

"...I see," Chisaki said, overwhelmed with a feeling that had his shoulders relaxing, "She was with you then?"

"...Yeah, she's at the apartment."

-

In the meantime, Sasaki had come to join them from the other side.

### **Eri & Chisaki**

“...Milk?” Chisaki stared in shock, “You have milk here?”

“Hm?” Yaoyozuro stared at the man and then nodded slowly. It was obvious that she was uncomfortable with his presence and demeanor, possibly because he was a former yakuza, possibly because he was a large man, “Yes… Would you like a cup?”

He shook his head, remembering to keep his demeanor cool. “No, thank you. I was just surprised that there’s still milk here. I figured it would have all gone bad by now.”

At this, the young girl seemed to smile, her eyes shining.

“Actually, we thought so too. But once Eri-chan got here, Helmet went and found some powdered milk for her,” she explained. “Right, Eri-chan?”

Eri reached for the cup, her eyes shining in a way he has never seen before. He didn’t think a cup of milk could make her so happy when all the expensive toys in the world didn’t.

“Yeah,” she said, voice quiet but filled with an enthusiasm that didn’t seem to fit inside of her small frame. The sight of it had the young girl beaming right back, like she had seen something absolutely wonderful.

Golden eyes widened for a fraction. He didn’t even consider that. While he could always Overhaul someone into health, he didn’t know what kind of long-term effects it could have. For all he knew, it would create a dependency on the human body to Overhaul. It was something he was willing to risk, but the thought that Eri wouldn’t be able to grow up independently with proper bodily functions always lingered.

He’s, again, grateful.

“I see,” he said.

Eri looked over at him, curious in a way she never was of him.

“...That’s good, isn’t it, Eri?” he asked.

She stared at him, and for a moment, he sees her mother’s gaze. It was the same gaze that the Oyabun gave him, something all-seeing, and he wondered what she could see in his muddled, sin-stained soul.

“...Yeah,” she said. “So, it’s okay, Chi-ossan.”

His eyebrow twitched back. Definitely took after her mother.

“Eri, I’m not even 30.”

Yaoyozuro gasped back, and when his eyes turned to her, found that she couldn’t meet his glance.

...Seriously?

### **Chisaki & Helmet - to keep a promise**

“...Well,” Chisaki said, heaving a deep sigh, “Regardless of the… extra baggage, I made a promise that I intend to keep.”

He turned to Helmet, and the visor of the helmet shined as it turned towards the taller man.

“The vision that you want, whatever it is that you are working towards, please include me in that future and I will make it a reality.”

He gave a full bow to the man, prim and proper, formal and certain. Behind him, his men looked uncertainly between their boss and their new boss, before most of them bowed their heads as well.

Helmet faced him for another moment before he turned and walked out, making no motion to indicate that he understood or acknowledged what was going on

The door closed behind him, while Chisaki remained bowed.

"That… that little…" one of his men growled out, frustrated and upset that the man he entrusted his entire being to was getting so disrespected, but was cut off when Chisaki started to laugh.

The man threw his head back, laughing almost maniacally as he covered his eyes with one of his hands. The men that he came with and Eri stared in wide-eyed shock, as though they didn’t know who this was.

"Good!" He said, calming down to a few chuckles, "I was a little worried when I saw the heroes, but it seems it was for nothing. Helmet…” his eyes shined in their mirth, laughing at a joke that no one else knew about, “hasn't changed a bit."

Next to him, Kurono turned, covering his smile with a hand.

"Wh… what do you mean, Boss?"

Yellow eyes, looking more alive at the end of the world than ever before, carried a mischievous sparkle. He turned to Irinaka and gave a little shrug, looking more relaxed and comfortable than they have ever seen him.

"Think about it," he said, and it was telling that he was willing to explain himself at all. "All these heroes, some women, and all these people with differing and powerful quirks, but he's allowing us, a group of men and one child, with unknown backgrounds and quirks, in with no questions."

He chuckled again.

"A fool who has still remained alive this whole time. Even going as far to continuously take in scumbags of all sorts. And that fool is the only one that would wait for us. Does that make sense to you?"

He pulled on his jacket, straightening it as his eyes narrowed fondly.

"Gentlemen," he said, addressing them, "we must repay this kindness. Should I hear a single complaint of you here, or another person complaining about you, punishment will be in order. I will not allow Helmet to think that I have brought him something useless, understand?"

But more so than the unnamed punishment, what scared his men was how taken their boss was by this mysterious guy-in-a-helmet.

Chisaki, however, was just happy to be the person who follows instead of the person who leads in this uncertain darkness when all he wanted was death.

### **Chisaki & Twice - returnee**

“So, he’s always been like this?”

In case no one mentioned it before, Twice didn’t like Chisaki.

The former yakzua, whatever that meant, side-eyed him the same way all the adults used to eye him back when he was younger and convinced that he would never be lonely.

“Pardon?” Chisaki replied, and Twice hated how he could sound so intellectual and condescending in a single word.

“Helmet-san,” Twice said, “You’ve been here before, right? Was he like that then?” He didn’t know how this guy was so shameless to come back after leaving once, because Twice couldn’t even imagine leaving in the first place. He gnashed his teeth but begrudgingly kept his mouth shut.

“Ah, yes,” Chisaki nodded slowly, “If you mean, he’s antisocial but always looks for new company, then yes, he hasn’t changed in the slightest.”

“Oh, okay,” the blond nodded. He wasn’t sure if that was good news or not. He just wanted to know more about Helmet. “Hey, he speaks Japanese, right?”

The look of unaffected boredom gave way to sharper eyes.

“Does it matter?” he asked.

“I don’t care. // I hate foreigners!” Twice replied back.

“Well, it would make sense why he keeps himself tucked away,” Chisaki replied back, almost careless in nature and still refined. “Foreigners are the first blamed for all the wrong-doings in a country.” He gave a hum, “Of course, it doesn’t make any difference to me.”

“It doesn’t mean anything to me, either!” Twice snapped back, “

In case Twice didn’t mention it before, he really didn’t like Chisaki.

### **Chisaki + Compress - new arms & portfolio building**

“... You want a new arm?” Chisaki asked suddenly.

Compress paused for a moment.

“Pardon?”

“Your arm wasn’t bitten off, right?” the man replied, “Of course not, you’re still here. And frankly, having an armless person walk around is going to be a strain more often than not, especially since it’s clear that you’re not used to being one-handed."

He pulled his glove off, looking as disinterested as ever.

“So, what will it be? Do you want a new arm?”

Compress… has seen what he could do. It was a terrifying ability, all things considered. Still, when he thought about the way Shigaraki looked down at him and Dabi’s snort when they saw him, knew that this was his chance.

He nodded.

-

Compress stared for a long time. He moved each and every single one of his digits, trying to open and close his hands into fists.

"Here, use your quirk on this," Chisaki said as he passed a pen to him.

Compress caught the pen, the weight of it real and resting in the arm he didn't have for so long, and with a quivering heart, compressed it.

The small marble sat in his hand for a second. He turned it back into a pen.

"Not bad, right?"

Compress stared, and even though he and everyone knew that Chisaki was doing this as a massive power flex to create an unshakable position at this base. Compress knew that he was just a portfolio piece for Chisaki to demonstrate the extent that his quirk can work. It was terrifying, to think that this man could just bend physics and reality like so but-

-but Compress had his arm back.

"...Thank you," he said quietly. "I will never forget this."

## Summer - Apples

### **Summertime: Fuyumi - Ice-type**

Deku had to take a detour to find some bleach for his bat when he stumbled upon the sight of Fuyumi and Eri talking.

“Wow!” Eri said, her hands coming up to her face in surprise.

Fuyumi stared back, a warm smile on her face as she leaned forward to give the carefully constructed ice-butterfly to Eri.

“Here, you can have it,” she said.

Eri gasped again, reaching for it, but right before her fingers could touch the ice, pulled her hands back.

“Won’t it melt?”

“It should be good for another week,” Fuyumi said, “and I can just make more, so let me know if you want another one oka-”

She yelped in surprise as Deku ran for her. He clearly didn’t see anything else, as he knocked over a chair and collided with the table. The screech brought others forward, but Deku reached for her. He suddenly stopped himself, as though remembering something, about four feet from her. He stood there for a few seconds, and they watched him take a slow, heaving breath.

“Fuyumi?” Natsuo called out, and frowned. “What’s going on here?”

It seemed to snap Deku out of his stupor, because he suddenly ran out of the room.

“...Wasn’t that Helmet?” Natsuo asked, narrowing his eyes as he twisted his head to follow where the man had ran out. His lips curled down into a clear frown, “What did he want? Did… Did he…” he narrowed his eyes and Fuyumi shook her head.

“Uh…” she blinked, more confused than anything. “Oh no, I’m fine. I was just surprised…”

Eri peered up at Natsuo, hiding a little behind the other woman, and Fuyumi redirected her gaze to the adorable girl at her side. She suppressed the urge to squeal loudly.

“That was weird, huh?” she asked. While Helmet was an interesting … identity, she didn’t distrust him as much as her brother did, or trust him as much as some of the other adults here did. In all honesty, she didn’t think she had enough information to make any form of judgement on the man.

Fuyumi had no doubts that this man wouldn’t hurt her. If he wanted to demand something from her or watch her suffer, he would have done so from the get go. It helped that he stopped himself from coming into arm’s range. Something, apparently, startled him.

She thought it was strange that he never took off his helmet and was pretty much never seen outside of his room, but he also made sure that there was an ample amount of resources and supplies for everyone here. From what she heard from the other Pro-Heroes, he was the person who had pulled this entire settlement together.

“...I’ve never seen him like that before,” Eri said quietly.

And then, the man in the helmet came running back. In his arms was a large insulated tote bag. He thrusted in front of her and she felt even more confused. She stared at the bag and then Eri spoke up.

“...Did you want a butterfly, too?”

He nodded, and staring at the bag and the butterfly, Fuyumi put it together.

“...My ice can keep things cold for a few hours under sunlight. If you take good care of it, it’ll last a few days,” she said quietly, making a small icicle and placing it in the bag. “You can eat it too, but it won’t taste very good since it’s made from the moisture in the air.”

Deku pulled the bag to stare at it. He nodded and turned to leave the room. But right before he did, picked up the chair he knocked over and moved the table back.

She didn’t think he was a bad person. Perhaps a little isolated from society, but not a bad person. And more importantly, she didn’t think she had any place to refuse him as it was. He was the reason that they could eat whatever they want, however much they wanted, and didn’t ever ask or imply for something in return.

-

The following day, Fuyumi was eating breakfast when Deku came in to stand in front of her. She blinked and stopped eating to stare at the man, and didn’t fail to notice the silence that followed. He lifted up an insulated tote bag in front of her and she smiled back.

Easily, especially now that she had ample food and rest, she filled it to the brim with ice. In hindsight, it was probably a little too much since the young man couldn’t quite close the tote bag, but he rushed back out.

“...Did he seriously just ask for a bag of ice?”

“Uhm... yeah, I guess,” she replied back, turning to her little brother. Still a little surprised at the fact that she could do this, didn’t miss the opportunity, “Good morning, Shoto. Did you sleep well?”

“...Yes,” he said, ducking his head, a little embarrassed. “Did you?”

She beamed back. In reality, she didn’t sleep well at all, but there were suddenly so many more things to look forward to. To think, she would be at a place where her nightmares weren’t preludes to an awful reality anymore.

So, when Helmet came jogging back in with another tote bag, she filled it up too. And then, when he came back for the third time, she paused.

“Are there more after this?” she asked.

His hands stilled and he leaned back. For a guy that she’s never seen the face or know the name of, he said a lot with body language. He was clearly uncomfortable with the question, but she didn’t know why. So, she hoped her new words would alleviate the discomfort instead.

“Instead of making you run around like that, I’ll go and help you instead,” she said, standing up. “Shoto, I’ll come back for my breakfast, so keep an eye on it for me, okay?”

Her little brother frowned, but nodded back.

So this time, she followed Helmet, and when she saw the sizable wooden cart with several insulated tote bags, was glad she did so.

But really, with all these bags, what was he going to do?

-

While she filled the bags up with little difficulty, she shivered a little. Using too much ice could really ruin her body temperature. It wasn’t that she forgot, but that she wanted to help more.

She didn’t even realize that her teeth were chattering until the tote bag in front of her was slowly being closed. Her head snapped up and Helmet stood on the cart, looking down at her. He closed the bag fully and pulled it to rest against the back edge of the cart. He nodded at her, and handed her a thermos.

She stared at it and opened it. Immediately, the delicious aroma of hot barley tea flooded her nostrils. The smell of it immediately warmed her to her core. She looked up to thank him, and the words died in her mouth as she watched him mount a bicycle at the front of the cart. And she watched in shock as he began to bike out of the main entrance and onto the road with it.

….That’s it?

She stood there, a little shell-shocked, and must have stood there for quite some time because Natsuo came running up to her.

“Fuyumi? What’s up? Shoto said you’ve been out here for a while. Did something happen?”

“He just left,” she said, quietly. She turned to her brother. “Is… Is this normal? Is this how supply runs work? He’s going on a supply run, right?”

He stared at her for another moment, “Someone left? Who?”

“H-Helmet!” she responded back, “Helmet just left!”

“What?!”

They both turned to where former Pro-Hero Eraserhead stared back with a scowl on his face.

“You’re kidding me,” he growled out.

-

In about a week, he would return with half an orchid’s worth of apples and former number two Pro-Hero Endeavor.

### **[Deku] Endeavor & Long Ride**

What Deku learned, and he never wanted to learn this, was that Endeavor had a breaking point.

The man was fucking delusional by the time he got to him. Deku almost felt bad, but he also doesn’t need to be a doctor to know that Endeavor was going to fucking die. It was that awful. The man was about to die and all Deku could think was that he would never ever even get a chance to get an autograph from this man, since he’s going to die.

But he does his best. If he died, he’ll die knowing that someone cared, and someone respected him and someone wanted him to live.

“...It’s okay,” he said, legs aching to make-up for the lost distance since he still had to get back to the complex within the week and he’s got about a day and a half left. He gotta make sure these apples make it back before they start to spoil.

Eri’s favorite food is candied apple. She doens’t know it yet, but it’s fucking delicious, and the thought of her smile makes him pedal harder. There are people, actual real people, that are back at home, and they were waiting for his return.

“...We can make light. It’s not dark. We’re not lost.”

He didn’t know it, since he’s talking to himself like a fucking loon, (and wasn’t that just a joke, a fucking loon pulling another one in a cart filled with the Number Two Hero and apples) but Enji heard him.

Enji heard him, and his entire body betrayed him by latching onto hope.

### **Shouto & Endeavor**

Todoroki's back hit the wall. His hands came up to his face, feeling his eyes water but he couldn't quite cry.

A quirkless world, he couldn't help but think, was wonderful.

### **Returning with Endeavor -**

The sudden reunion of the Todoroki family was an ironic affair. There were plenty of people that milled about the base who wished and prayed for their family’s safety. There were probably more who had witnessed or put down family members themselves. And then, came the Todoroki’s, who looked like they were in absolute agony when the more and more of them were reunited.

"Why…? I…I was okay with the world ending," Todoroki Shouto whispered, before the expression morphed into anger as he narrowed his eyes back, "if it meant a world without you."

It was… unexpectedly cold, and Enji took a step back in his surprise. Or maybe he wasn't actually surprised, as his eyes dropped to the ground and he clenched his fists tightly to his side instead. Since the first gates opened and the monsters poured in, cruelty was the new norm.

“Perhaps… it was a mistake to have survived after all,” he said quietly. “I’m sorry, that all your resources and efforts could not bear fruit.”

Across the way, Shoto and Natsuo were all but snarling. Pale-faced Fuyumi pushed herself up against the wall like she was ready to become one with it. Blue fire kept igniting from his hands, dissipating just as fast, but Dabi kept his sharp eyes on the man in the Helmet. The young man looked around to see how confused everyone seemed to be, and how disgruntled some of the others looked.

Walking into this conversation wasn’t something that anyone could have been prepared for. He had literally just stepped in to grab some more bleach and had stumbled into this fight. However, he was far too loud when he came in and it was made evident with the way everyone turned to him in an instant.

He winced, but the way they were looking at him was painful. The way they seemed to perk up, and Fuyumi’s silent plea for help, was something that Helmet couldn’t abandon.

He just… He got so nervous trying to think of what to say. But he had gotten used to Natsuo’s sunshine-like laughs, Shoto’s small smiles, Fuyumi’s eternal kindness, and Dabi’s patience. He would even dare say that he even treasured them. If they all left right now, he would be sad to see them go, but glad that they’re finally ready to leave on their own accord.

But now, it seemed that they would leave. He should prepare for that.

What did he need to do? How can he protect people that can’t stand each other? Why did they look to him for this? It’s okay, if they leave. He wouldn’t fight them. He’d give them supplies too, whatever they thought that they needed. If it would make them happier in this despair-infested world, Deku would do just about anything.

A thousand things and possibilities opened up, and he lifted the bleach in his hands and placed it on the table. The rag that he had been planning to use to finish wiping down the staircase fell, getting caught on the lid and falling from its place on his wrist. He stared at it, mortified that he had possibly ruined this emotional atmosphere with his insincerity.

With that, he spun on his heel and nearly ran out of the room, ready to scream into his hands.

-

This… was a sign, right?

For Helmet to throw the rag with the bleach down in front of them like that, it felt like he was telling them that there were more important things to do and worry about. Or maybe it was his way of telling them to clean up their fucking mess and move on. They wouldn’t know.

But regardless, he had left them a bottle of bleach and a rag.

More than forgiveness or acceptance, they all had the same experiences and the same conclusion.

They all were trying to live.

### **Dabi & Helmet - Endeavor**

Desperately needing an outlet, he got ready to leave instead. He had abandoned the bleach in his quest, so he figured he’d grab another one instead. He left his apartment unit and made his way down the stairs. It looked like everyone was busy somewhere else, and he wouldn’t be harrassed again on his way out.

“Once I knew what to look for, you’re really easy to predict and read,” someone called out from behind him.

Fuck.

He turned around and stared as Dabi came forward. His posture looked casual, but he could see how tight his shoulders were even from here. Vaguely, he wondered when they became so close that he could read Dabi that easily, from this distance, through his visor.

“... You always leave before dawn on days you're not burning shit late into the night. You make a line right for the main entrance and you always take the left staircase. You got two bats if you’re going out to check the perimeter and you take one if you’re just grabbing supplies. If you’re trying to find something new, you’ll spend a couple more minutes in the Office before you head out. These are all things that you’ve always done, and I finally get it. And then, as soon as I think that… that I can understand you, you do something outside of my expectations.”

He slammed his hand against the wall, and a flash of blue painted the space between them before dying out just as fast. As someone who that fire has always helped, it was strange to see it then and there, when there were no bodies to burn.

“What… What are you thinking? Where are you going? What’s your goal? Everything about you is a contradiction. You bring in people, save them, help them, feed them, but you don’t ask anything of them. You know all the tips and tricks and have great ideas to make them happen but you don't make them do it. You let them sit on their asses, sucking away at all your resources.

“But I know you’re not someone too weak to let them walk all over you. I know you don’t want glory or respect, since it’s not like you ever spend time with them either,” he said, going on a long rant about everything that he’s been holding in for so long.

Deku stared back in shock, but behind his helmet, no one could see it.

“When I think that you just like helping people or being with them, you slap them away if they get too close and then disappear for days on end. You don’t ask us for anything or talk to us. If you’re distrustful then don’t bring more people to hide from. If you don’t want to be with anyone, then stop bringing them here.”

Dabi rubbed his face with his hand before he pushed it through his hair.

“This is exhausting. I don’t want to do this. I don’t want to care. I don’t…”

He looked at Deku, so wretchedly lost that the young man almost took a step forward on instinct to try and help. When he did that, Dabi gave this laugh, like there was no hope left in the world, and his shoulders slumped in defeat.

“How come, now that the world has ended, I find someone that I want to help? I don’t… I don’t even know what you look like.”

Deku, from what he knows of Dabi, knew that he was a lost man. He’s someone who has been wronged by the world and then decided that it was too much trouble to try and navigate through it any longer. He’s someone who wants to indulge in his desires without hesitation or remorse. He’s someone who wants to live as he wished, without anything holding him down. He was someone who moved when he wanted to, and someone who spoke as he pleased.

Truly, he was the kind of person that Deku would never get along with, understand, or ever voluntarily interact with. He was like the sun of a different solar system, spinning and burning away in a far away land that Deku could only see in passing, at night, a thousand light years away.

He wondered what he should say. Then he wondered what he could say. He wondered why the man had come to him, and why he cared at all.

“What the fuck am I supposed to do? What do you want from me? What should I do so that I can be useful to you?”

Deku stared back for a moment, a long moment, and thought hard about it.

He was fine. He really was fine. He only went out and did things because he wanted to keep his body in movement. He liked the work-out, and the strain on his muscles. He liked helping people, and he didn’t mind getting extra supplies as needed for them. He knew that one day, he won’t be able to come back, so it would be better to let the people here have whatever. It’ll be a waste otherwise. It gave him something to focus on and something to do. It wasn’t like he was going out of his way to save people, they just managed to live long enough that he could help them.

He wasn’t a hero, after all.

He got a little overwhelmed at times, of course, just because he wasn’t used to seeing and being in close proximity with all these people all of a sudden. But he really, really didn’t mind it. The life that people brought with their voices and footsteps and existence was something that Deku used as a source of comfort.

He had been alone far too long.

Just having people here was great. He felt like there was a purpose to his life aside from waking up and waiting to see someone who felt like a distant memory now. They had come great strides from where he used to be. They had running water, electricity, water filters, food, medicine and good company who didn’t actively try to endanger each other. There was plenty of space for people to step away and take some time for themselves. There were plenty of people who were healing, and many who had regained their smile.

He stared at the man in front of him, satisfied with his conclusion.

Dabi had already done enough.

The Dabi that was dying, that was okay with dying, on that day when they first met, was no longer the Dabi that Deku knew. The Dabi that Deku knew laughed through his nose, teased Iguchi, and was willing to burn himself to light the way home. His Dabi was the Dabi that greets him in the morning and in the evening, and can talk for hours on end as they make their way through desolate roads.

And that was enough for Deku.

Of all the things he could have said, he didn’t realize that he said the worst possible thing for a while. Saying nothing at all, for him, was normal. He liked how everything was now, and there was no reason to change.

Deku turned on his heel and walked out, leaving behind the shell-shocked man behind him. He felt a little more certain about himself.

-

“Oh, Dabi, there you are,” Iguchi said, rounding the corner to approach the man. “You coming for dinner?”

He paused as he took in the sight of his friend. He was leaning against the wall, looking at his hands.

“Haha,” Dabi laughed hollowly, “I got rejected by someone who I don’t even know the name of, could you believe it?”

-

Dabi had lived a pitiful life. He had lived, thinking and believing, that all he wanted to do was make Endeavor suffer. There might have been a concrete reason, but all he knew was that he wanted to make the whole world burn down. He wanted Endeavor’s life to come crashing down all around him.

For a long time, he thought that it would be worth surviving if he could see it.

And then, between then and now, the world went to shit. He ended up with that fucking Liberation Front and then abadoned again, and then was saved by a tiny guy in a helmet. In those few months where nothing was said and nothing was expected and nothing should have changed, Dabi felt his whole world kilter off-course.

Looking at Endeavor’s broken and bleeding body, his tired and dead eyes, when he came in on the back of Helmet’s cart, Dabi didn’t feel anything.

But, when he thought about killing Endeavor, to let him burn away into nothing and grant his wish to die, he couldn’t.

Helmet still didn’t take his helmet off. Then, if Dabi killed someone that he had carted in, wouldn’t it mean that he wouldn’t take it off ever? Or worse yet, would the first expression Dabi see on Helmet’s face be disappointed?

Who was he kidding?

He just didn’t want to disappoint Helmet.

He didn’t know who he was anymore.

### **Cleaning**

It was rare to see Helmet without his fire extinguisher and his large bag, but here he was. With a gallon of bleach in his hand, and a bucket with a rag hanging off of it in the other, he walked out of the area with the same amount of ease as he always did.

Turns out, he was cleaning off the bloodstains that painted the walls and roads that came up to the apartment.

This, Shoji thought to himself, he could start here. Even he could do this.

“Could I… Could I help?” he asked.

Helmet paused in scrubbing off the walls and then stared at Shoji. His head turned to the bucket, back to the young man, and then to the stain on the wall. He wiped like nothing happened.

Shoji felt his will crumble.

“Ara? Are you joining us? You should just suit up and jump in.”

He turned to where Hawks stared back at him. And Shoji mentally smacked himself when he realized that the former pro had his own bucket and rubber gloves.

“R-Right,” he said nodding.

It was probably meaningless and nothing to be proud of, but this time last week, Shoji broke into tears at the thought of leaving a safe area. With a deep breath, he sat down and started to scrub at a particularly gruesome stain that painted the wall. He tried not to breath in too deep, and his stomach churned, but this was a start.

If someone smaller than him was going out and making things better. Saving people of all types and sizes, and sharing his precious resources in a time like this without ever explaining anything, Shoji wanted to do something too.

He didn’t want to be satisfied just being a survivor.

## Summer - Construction

### **Construction**

A few hours later, the rare sight of Helmet walking around the apartment complex came to the focus of the others. Even rarer was that he didn't have his backpack, his bat, or trademark fire extinguisher strapped to his thigh.

It would be the most casual they have ever seen him.

He walked around, looking and peering around with several notebooks in his arms. Seeing him, Mirio stepped forward.

"Heyya, Helmet-san. You need help with that?" He asked, motioning to the stacks of notebooks he was holding. The visor of the helmet faced him, and he shook his head a little.

Despite the rejection, the young man straightened. From what he heard, Helmet rarely acknowledges anyone as it was. Perhaps, he was unused to all of them before, but he was better about it now.

The thought comforted him.

"Then, do you mind if I come with you?" he asked.

Helmet responded by walking around him and then away. Well, since Mirio knew that he would shake his head to indicate 'no’, he’s certain that this must be his ‘yes’.

Walking next to him, Mirio is forced to recognize how much smaller Helmet is than him. When he dropped down and dispatched all those Walkers all those weeks ago, almost completely on his own, he thought that he was much bigger than the person walking next to him right now. Helmet barely came up to his chest, probably half a head or so shorter than Nejire, and with the way his clothes seemed to swamp him, was probably thinner than Tamaki.

They made it down the corridor when Mirio saw the (former) yakuza gathered around in the room. He kept the smile on his face, but he tensed a little. Sasaki didn’t say anything to him about it, but he had overheard some of the heroes talking about the number of villains here.

Overhaul, being one of them.

What was the likelihood that they, the remains of a hero agency and the only active yakuza group from that same area would end up here? He didn’t know, but they had to live together now.

This would be the tensest safe-area Mirio had ever been to. With people on all sides showing open hostility against each other, it was hard to think that they had managed to cohabitate altogether. For a guy who never speaks, Helmet clearly has some charisma that he holds over everyone else here. His presence was enough to squander any sense of rebellion against each other.

However, it sounded like Overhaul and Helmet had some personal history. There was, of course, the possibility that Helmet was also a villain or yakuza or some other dark-dealer, but with the amount of heroes and children here, it didn’t feel likely. Mirio had seen what regular people do to their heroes once they realized that even heroes couldn’t stop an apocalypse. He doesn’t really want to think about what a villain would do to them.

At the same time... Was Helmet really just some random guy? After all this time? With all these resources and a rather stable and pretty normal apartment? Collecting people as he finds them in the street like they were in one of those card-collecting games Tamaki used to play when they were middle school? Why did Helmet start now? Where was Helmet when this whole thing began?

It made Mirio want to scream. There was something like this the whole time? And after the anger and the sadness and disappointment in himself that he couldn’t make this a reality at the places he was at, he wanted to know and see for himself what made this place so different.

As it was, there were some places, some unnamed tensions between people that made it suffocating to be in some rooms. However, it was also clear that there was only One Rule here.

Let Helmet do what he does, whatever it may be.

And so, he watched with mild alarm, that one rule keeping him still, as Helmet made his way right up to the yakuza group. At the sight of him, the men parted for him, and Chisaki visibly straightened when he realized who was there.

While standing, he spoke up. “Helmet? What do I owe this pleasure to-”

Helmet lifted his stack of notebooks higher, and understanding, Chisaki nodded to Kurono, who cleaned up their card game. If they were upset, they didn’t dare say anything. As it was, Helmet dropped the notebooks onto the table and grabbed one. He flipped to one of the pages marked with a post-it note and slid it over to the former boss. Chisaki arched an eyebrow as he looked at it. The man who stared down Nighteye with so much scorn didn’t hesitate to take the offered notebook.

“...Do you want me to... make this?”

Mirio’s eyes widened, vividly remembering the absolutely defeated look on Maijima’s face as he quietly explained to some of the other teachers about how he wants to help but has no idea on how to help.

“...This will take a lot of energy and time,” he said, “...It pains me to say this, but we should enlist the help of the others here. Their quirks can be a lot more helpful for some of these than I can. It’ll help expedite the entire process.”

Helmet tilted his head back and nodded. Then, he pointed at the clock.

“...Hm? You want to go over this… soon?”

Helmet raised his entire hand up, splaying out his fingers and Chisaki’s eyebrow arched.

“In… five minutes?” Setsuno piped up.

Helmet shook his head.

“...5:00 PM then?” Kurono asked.

Helmet nodded.

“...Haha,” Chisaki chuckled, “I see. To think that I wouldn’t understand something as simple as that… alright.”

Helmet, seemingly satisfied with the turnout, turned on his heel to leave. The blond next to him stared in alarm, shocked that there was no further point of contact, but right when he turned away, the (former) yakuza called him.

“Young man, I can trust you to inform the other heroes here, right? At 5 PM, we will have a meeting about the reconstruction of this area,” he said. His gaze then dropped to the notebooks, “In the meantime, it looks like I have my work cut out for me.”

Mirio hesitated, and casting one last glance to Helmet’s back, called out, “I’ll go tell the others,” he said. Helmet didn’t even stop.

The blond has never met anyone as kind and as cold as Helmet.

-

“...Kai,” Kurono asked quietly, “...Why are you bringing in the other Pros?”

“First of all,” he said, motioning to the open-page spread, “I want to give Helmet the best product as fast as possible. No doubt, this is all things that should be done before the worst of winter, so it should be ready by October. Then, we can make any adjustments as needed clear before November, when we will be needing it.”

Kurono’s eyes widened at the markings of various engine types that littered the page. His eyes glanced to Chisaki, who made the motion for him to go ahead and read it. He took the notebook, uncaring about how the others scooted closer to read over his shoulder.

There were notes about making generators, and padding up the rooms to make sure that they were better insulated. There were cost-benefit analysis for each type of generator, as well as the sources and the storage that could be made. There were details concerning how they could make back-ups and use alternative energy sources as needed.

Chisaki kept flipping through the next notebook.

Water purification, ideas on where and how it would run… He wondered how long Helmet had been holding on to these. And then, he wondered who was here with Helmet before, as he noticed that the handwritings varied greatly from page to page.

“Second, tensions here are way too high. We’re a spark away from burning up this entire camp. It’s impressive that Helmet managed to keep all of them in line just by being himself, but if we keep expanding, we will eventually find people who will challenge him more than not. Inevitably, we will clash and fight then. At that time, who do you think that Helmet will side with?”

Kurono nodded, even without saying anything, he understood exactly what would happen. Undoubtedly, Helmet wouldn’t take their side. Why would he? There were heroes of great caliber and impressive statues here.

“Then, the best chances of unification would be if everyone is working together for the same goal. As long as it’s Helmet’s goal, I doubt there will be many complaints.”

At this, he gave a long sigh, betraying how his eyes slid eagerly over the pages. His fingers traced some of the words and he flipped through the notebook with an extraordinary amount of care. Golden eyes softened, soaking in the words and diagrams like they were so much more than ink on paper.

“This guy has some lofty goals,” he said, and despite making it sound like a trouble and a giant pain in the ass, his eyes were bright with a light they hadn’t seen in a very long time.

Chisaki was excited. He didn’t want to let someone down.

“How annoying,” their boss said, putting one notebook down and carefully opening the next one, “Geez, I can’t believe him. What a slave-driver. Figures I would owe my life to a relentless guy like him. Could you believe it? He brought this to me to figure it out for him,” he continued. The corners of his lips twitched up, looking pleased.

They all eyed each other, differing amounts of confusion and worry etching their faces. Comparing this Chisaki to the Chisaki that they knew before The End came, it was a slight difference. All except Kurono and Irinaka, who were suddenly reminded of the Chisaki at the end of Middle School Graduation, when Oyaji came to personally congratulate him when they came back to the manor, never realized that Chisaki could be like this.

It was as nostalgic as it was painful. It was as strange as it was fascinating.

At the end of the world, Chisaki looked like he was having fun.

### **Nighteye - Sasaki Mirai & Notes**

Sasaki sat down and leafed through the papers in front of him with meticulous scrutiny. His eyes slid through, following the crammed mess of words onto the page, and squinted every once in a while when the handwriting got particularly messy.

“...These are some great details,” he said, leafing through the worn notebooks with great care. “I’m truly impressed that you managed to even make some of these observations.”

Aizawa stared at him for a moment and then took the seat in front of him. He slid the cup of hot tea towards the older man, who took it graciously.

“It’s not mine,” he said. “They were like that when I came here.”

Sasaki’s fingers stilled as his eyes flitted up to the former Pro’s face, “You mean…”

Aizawa nodded, “You’re looking at the notes of our resident Helmet-head.”

“...Amazing,” Sasaki said, but no, now that he was thinking about it, this made a lot more sense.

Someone had managed to pull all of this together, and from what Aizawa and the others had reported, that someone was calm and collected and resourceful to the nth degree. It was someone who has redefined peace in their minds, and gave them something familiar without ever saying a word.

And to think, they were this meticulous in their writings. They had kept careful notes about everything from the weather, the temperature, the supplies, and the Walkers and monsters they encountered, day by day, hour by hour. Maps were marked, notebooks were carefully logged. The organization brought tears to Sasaki’s eyes.

Some of the notes got rough, and there were some Kanji that was harder to read than others, but it wasn’t the worst handwriting he had to squint through.

“And he updates these every day?”

“Every couple of days,” Aizawa said, “Or at least that’s how it’s been since we got here. Sometimes, he’ll scribble this and that down when we’re out and about. I’m sure that he’s got plenty of things filled with his writing at this point.”

“Have you tried to talk to him through writing instead?” Sasaki asked.

The older man rubbed his neck, already showing what he needed to know about how troublesome it must be to do just that. “It’s hard to get him as it is,” he explained, “either he’s leaving or coming in. The only other exception is if he’s unloading supplies or he’s in here writing.”

Sasaki frowned at that. “Does he rest? Eat?”

Aizawa shrugged back, “We assume so since he’s in his room for hours on end.”

The frown on his face looked even more sterner, and the teacher scowled back.

“Look, it’s nearly fucking impossible to talk at him sometimes. Most days, I still can’t believe that someone as cold as him did save us all. Made even worse because he’s got those villains hanging around him.”

It wasn’t heroic, by any means, but they were really at the end of their ropes. What else were they supposed to do? It wasn’t like they could just ask-

In that second, Mirio popped his head in, “Sir! Aizawa-sensei!” he called out, “Helmet is calling a meeting at five pm tonight.”

Aizawa’s jaw dropped.

“What?”

“Yeah, something about construction,” the blond said, “I gotta go tell the others, but please tell everyone you see.”

“Wha-Mirio!”

“Yes?”

Sasaki narrowed his eyes, “And Helmet… said this? Where did you get this information?”

“I was with him when he asked Over… uh… Chisaki-san to make something, and Chisaki-san said that it’ll be easier if everyone was here together.”

Meaning, they weren't going because Helmet wanted them.

### **Meeting - Construction**

The meeting was held in the dining room.

“Come one, come all,” Twice cheered loudly.

“This is our first meeting, right?” Hawks said, climbing in through the windows and taking a seat on the windowsill. “Or at least, the first meeting that Helmet called in?”

“Okay,” Kirishima nodded, ‘Then why did he leave?”

“...What?”

They all turned to the redhead, who took a step back at the sudden attention.

“Uh yeah, he just left.”

### **The Nail Incident**

Kan Sekijiro felt it again. The cold fingertips wrapping around his neck like a noose, and slowly freezing him from the inside-out. Since he got here, this would be the first time he was going to join the supply party out. He agonized over this for a long time, thinking and praying that he would be needed and that he wouldn’t need to, until he came out.

He didn’t want to live like this anymore. He didn’t want to be accustomed to living in fear. And most importantly, he was sick of watching people (children especially) die.

“Whoa, you’re super tense!” Toga commented, startling him out of his thoughts. She walked around him with a big grin, like a shark locking onto bleeding prey. “You going to be okay out there, Mr. Hero-san?” she asked sweetly, both knowing the nerves he was facing.

He shot her a look from the corner of his eye, but compared to someone who had been going in and out of the base, he knows that he has no ground to fight on.

“I’m sure that it will be hard, but I have the greatest confidence that I will be an asset! I am excited to join the supply group today.”

There was a beat of pause as all eyes turned to Mirio and his beaming smile. It should have been comforting, but Kan had personally seen those kinds of smiles splattered in blood.

“Uh no,” Toga said, frowning as she stepped forward, “It’s my turn this time. And with me, there’s four already here.”

The blond arched an eyebrow as he tilted his head, “Is there a limit to how many people that can go out?”

She hesitated at that, because to begin with, Helmet never seemed to care (or notice) how many people came in or out with him. They only said things like “four people” because that’s just how they ended up working it out. It wasn’t a hard-set rule.

There were no hard-set rules.

If you wanted to come on a supply run, you just had to show up. If you wanted to leave, just go. There was no actual enforcement nor were there any guidelines. People were free to do what they wanted to do, whenever they wanted. Kan remembers Aizawa scolding some of the younger kids on supplies, but there was never a hard limit to begin with.

Toga took too long to answer, however, and Mirio’s smile turned even brighter.

“Then, I don’t think there’s anything wrong with coming along!” he cheered.

“If you hold us back, we’ll leave you behind,” Dabi called out. “And if you get in our way,” his lips stretched into a cruel resemblance of a grin, as he condensed a small fire across his fingers. “We’ll let you go quickly.”

The threat, as it could have been nothing else, didn’t phase Mirio in the slightest.

“I wouldn’t expect anything less!” he said instead, seeming to mean it. In response, Dabi and Toga both lost their smiles.

Just then, Helmet walked right past them. With the tip of his bat resting against his shoulder, he didn’t even pause when he walked by them. Instead, he moved on, Twice chatting brightly right next to him.

Without another wasted moment, Dabi and Toga turned to join them.

Standing a little further back, Mirio took a deep breath. It caught Kan’s attention, and his focus centered on the way his hands were trembling next to him.

Immediately, a flood of shame washed over him. Mirio was a kid. He wasn’t even 18. He hadn’t even graduated (and most likely, never will get a chance to). But here he was, doing his best to keep a smile on his face and persevere.

And look at Kan, who needs to be reminded of that.

Pathetic, he thought.

And just as fast, he made up his mind.

This was the end of his pathetic moment. He wasn’t going to let this rule him.

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Supply Run:

Twice , Deku, Toga, Vlad King &&& >> Tensei, Dabi, Mirio

While falling wasn’t something foreign to him, the landing was always something he took for granted. He has always been pretty decent at the whole falling in a way to minimize the amount of damage on himself. And well, occasionally, he fucks up bad.

Part of the problem is that he still doesn’t know how to fall with someone and mitigate all damage on both of them. It wasn’t too bad when he was on his own, and he does his absolute best to mitigate the damage that happens to them, it does occasionally end up really badly for him.

“...Helmet…?”

He had used his arms as a cushion of some sort for Twice, and he had extended his legs to take the brunt of the fall, but his entire weight did crash against the man. He felt bad, but feeling Twice’s arms tense around his waist, he was infinitely relieved that he was still alive.

For a brief second, he lost control of himself and his thoughts, and rubbed the top of Twice’s head, like someone would a dog. He was just too happy to not do that. He gave a big grin, the rush of adrenaline following their death-defying stunt was great.

And then he realized that his arm was stuck. He patted Twice, and tried to stand up but couldn’t because his arm was stuck. He gave a sharp exhale, the pain beginning to set in as he realized what had happened. Underneath him, the man groaned as he rolled over, and the two eventually disentangled from each other.

“Man, what a fall, huh? // Hey, Helmet, you’re fucking heavy, you know that?” he said, but he got up to his and shook his entire body. He rolled his neck and jumped up and down. “Aw, man that was only two floors?” he asked, looking up and shouting out, “Hey! You bastards! We’re fine!”

Toga, peering over the window ledge, waved back. “Yay, you guys are alive!”

Twice blew her a kiss in response, waving like mad and cheering.

“We’ll meet up with you in a second, stay put!” Kan yelled out, from next to Toga.

Next to him, Helmet didn’t budge, so Twice turned his attention to his … saivor? Friend? He wasn’t too sure what their relationship was, but he definitely didn’t want this man to die.

“Hey, Helmet, is everything okay?” he asked, “You’re just sitting there. You injured? // You jump off higher back at home, why would this bother you?”

He approached and gave a sharp gasp when he saw his arm. More importantly, the three nails sticking out of his arm. He probably fell on a part of the fence where there were nails hanging out, and instead of letting Twice’s head make contact like normal people would have, took the brunt of the hit himself.

“Oh,” he said. “Oh god. That… That really hurts, huh? Wow. Uh… Guess we have to head back early, right? //Are you going to die?”

If Helmet heard him, he didn’t care. He placed his foot onto the larger part of the fence and yanked his arm away. The high pitch scream that emitted out of Twice was something that was more surprising than getting nails in his arm.

Helmet didn’t even flinch, however, and pulled his backpack off and began digging through it, like this was a normal occurrence or something. He pulled out a roll of duct tape. He quickly wrapped, as tight as he could, from his elbow to his wrist, while Twice tried to process what was going on.

“What is he doing?”

“...N-nails… //You got pierced straight through and you’re going to duct tape it?!”

For good measure, he duct taped his bat to his hand. He put the duct tape away, zipped up his backpack, and with some careful maneuvering, he put it on. He rolled his shoulders, lifted the bat and swung it a couple of times, and felt satisfied.

“No,” Kan, who had managed to get an idea of what happened through Twice’s inconsistent babbling, said, “No, no, we should… We should go back and get that looked at,” he said.

Helmet walked right past him, clearly intending to just keep going. The other three eyed each other, as uncertain as always when it came to Helmet and the way that he operates.

“...You sure he’s injured?” Toga asked Twice quietly.

“I think I’d know if there were things going through his arm or not. // Should we knock him out and take him away?”

It painted a rather crude picture in their minds, but with each one of Helmet’s certain steps, it made them more and more uncertain about themselves.

“I mean, we don’t know his quirk still, right?” Twice spoke up, “So maybe he has a healing quirk?”

It was a better idea, and it did well to alleviate their worries for the moment.

-

One day, Deku hoped to repay all the kindness he had received from the others.

After the fall, Deku was only focused on his arm. As it turns out, there were three nails that were sticking out of the remains of the broken fence they crashed against. His padding and clothes made sure to keep the splinters and wood pieces out, but something as sharp as the nails, at the speed they were going at, had broken through. His clothes were punctured, the cardboard underneath was broken, and it was right through his padding on his forearm.

He grimaced at it. He was lucky he didn’t break anything, broken bones were a bitch to deal with, and he was luckier that it didn’t puncture his veins or anything. But looking at the tips of nails, red with rust and blood, as it poked out from the center of his forearm, he couldn’t muster up the thought that he was <lucky>.

But, hearing Twice behind him, his heart steadied itself.

He tried to put some strength into his hands, to close it into a fist, or even twitch his fingers. It wasn’t happening. Alright, it was either pain, shock, or the nails punctured through his muscle.

Fuck.

Deku, who had been doing his best to not cry, somehow found it in himself to smile under his mask instead. Twice was kind, and he was grateful for that. It wasn’t easy to care about other people, but Twice reached out to him. It was humbling, and it pulled his head out of the worst of his thoughts instantaneously.

Pulling the nails didn’t hurt. He could work through it, and if he just repeated it enough times in his head, he’s certain that everything will stop hurting.

That’s right, getting injured wasn’t a goal and it wasn’t something worth crying and dying over. This wasn’t anything. He’s had much worse, if only because he used to be alone. The footsteps of others came closer and he took a deep breath and yanked his arm out.

Experience kept him from screaming.

And the worried expression from the others was enough to keep pushing onwards. He’ll protect this.

### **Chisaki & Shigaraki - the return arm**

Afterwards, Chisaki was suddenly confronted by Shigaraki. He looked at him, then his hands-the remains of his fingers- and the back. He smirked under his mask as he reached for his glove. He knew why this man was here. Compress wasn’t discreet about having his arm back.

“Yes?” he asked.

The man normally slouched hard, but he pulled his shoulders back and titled his head. As a result, his bangs split so that his eyes could be seen and Chisaki snorted. Like he would falter just because some child glared at him.

“Is there an issue?”

Shigaraki took a deep breath. Chisaki is certain that this is someone who has never needed to bow his head to someone else before. While he would never say it aloud, he really did like watching people swallow their pride and put their head down.

“...Compress’ arm,” he said slowly, without even a greeting. Jeez, who taught this boy his manners? They clearly failed. “You fixed it, didn’t you?”

“I might have.”

“Could you… fix mine too?”

He could. It would be laughably easy. And once upon a time, when using his quirk didn’t wear him down so much, it would have been a quick and easy thing to do. And of course, he wouldn’t do it until he knew for a fact that it would benefit him directly and greatly.

“Hm… why would I do that?”

He’s seen children with powerful quirks before. He was one of them, before he was taken in by Oyaji. Then, he was a powerful kid that learned manners and had good control. No doubt, guys like Shigaraki deserved every bad thing that happened to them, and none of the good.

“I…” he scowled, and for a second, Chisaki thought that he would walk away in his fit of anger. He was proven wrong when Shigaraki clenched his jaw hard and bowed his head. “I want to help Helmet. So… Please.” He took a deep breath. It must have really taken a lot out of him to squeeze these words out from between his teeth. “Please, heal me.”

In times like these, he wondered if Helmet would have still helped and saved them if they knew what kind of scumbags they were.

He doubted it. That would just be stupid. And well, Chisaki didn’t want to give him a reason to.

Let it be known that he would never allow Helmet to regret saving him.

“...It’s not that I’m healing you,” Chisaki said, as he pulled his gloves off. “But that I’m reassembling you. This will hurt, so brace yourself.”

The look from those red eyes, certain and unrelenting in their gleam, Chisaki had no doubts that this was a man who had suffered before. But, for the first time in his life, will be suffering for another.

If the world didn’t end, Chisaki would have enjoyed working with Helmet outside of this. It would be interesting to work next to someone who didn’t need to speak to win the respect and loyalty of the people around him.

### **And Dabi Waits**

Deku couldn’t help but think that things were… different than he remembered.

He had come back right at dinnertime, where half of their residents start eating on rotation for whatever strange reason. And he almost hates these dogs, because he used to be able to sneak in and out of the complex with the minimal amount of people noticing, but now that four or five dogs were running out to greet him every time, it really ruined his discretion.

They’ve been barking since he came within three blocks. He knows that it’s because the stench of blood that clung to him was so strong, but at the same time, he wonders why they still come running at the scent of blood. The dogs and the Walkers have nothing to butt heads over. Yet, they’ve never failed to let Deku know when something was wandering too close by.

He couldn’t help but think that dogs are social creatures. Perhaps they missed the company of humans…?

No, these things were pointless to think about. It wasn’t like he could do anything to change it, and understanding it wasn’t going to make a difference. He just really wishes that they stop running in between his legs or running around him in circles because he’s sick of tripping over them.

As expected, Dabi was standing outside of the complex area, arms crossed over his chest as he narrowed his eyes at Deku.

He… He really wish Dabi would stop this. It's clear and obvious to everyone that supply-hunting and clearing out the infected like he does is hard to do and awful. Any small mistake could lead to someone getting infected. It's taxing on the heart, body and mind. The smell is wretched, and sight is disheartening. He knows this and understands it, and so is also totally fine doing this on his own.

He has grown accustomed to it. The others don't have to be.

"Hey," Dabi said, "Nice evening today, huh?"

God, was this better or Aizawa? He doesn't know, and he wishes that he didn't have to deal with either. He didn't really have an answer though, nor did he think that Dabi wanted one, so he just didn't respond. What the fuck would he save said anyways?

He wasn't sorry. Or at least, he wasn't sorry about this. As though sensing his mood, the dog at his side rubbed against him and he hated him too. If he had known that helping all of them would have accumulated into this giant, daily, shitfight, he would have….

He would have done nothing differently, actually. He didn't wish these kinds of awful circumstances onto anyone ever. Thinking in terms like that, he supposes it's better to be annoyed and frustrated than endlessly lonely.

“Good job, you guys,” Dabi said to the dogs around him. Augh, figures.

He turned to stare at him, and not for the first time, thought that Dabi could see right through the visor and into his heart or something, when those blue eyes zeroed in on his face. The man remained a little slouched as he ended up walking next to him.

“Are you hungry? Dinner just started, but I’m sure that Lunch Rush will give you priority.”

Deku rolls his eyes at that. He’s seen the line that Lunch Rush gets, to cut in front of everyone and demand the man to stop what he was doing to make him something sounded like something Lunch Rush wouldn’t tolerate. And, more importantly, everyone else would pitch a fit about it. He doubts that he’ll be an exception, but he thinks these are the moments that prove to him that Dabi’s much kinder than he lets on.

“But, knowing you, I bet that you would rather take a shower and get a change of clothes, right?”

Was there a point to this?

Deku stopped his trek and turned over to stare at Dabi, what did he want?

“...Let me take that for you,” he said, extending his hand out.

Usually, the man would just take it. What was his ploy? Why ask now? Deku looked at Dabi, looked at his gloved hands, and then back to the plastic bags he was holding. There weren’t any visible bloodstains on them, but he knew that his gloves were fucking drenched. Could he risk it?

He was dead tired, too. Thinking hurt and these days he felt like there were too many things that cluttered his mind.

Whatever, he’ll just drop everything off next to the rental Office and then head up to get some of this blood off. Everyone here is a little squeamish with blood, so he knows that it’ll remain unbothered.

“...Haa…” Dabi gave a little sigh, “It’s always a fight with you, huh?”

He ignored him, and did as he always did, with or without Dabi.

### **Setsuno & Deku - on a walk**

What possessed him to go?

When Setsuno saw Helmet, down the street from where he was, blaring an airhorn to attract everything unsavory towards him, he just stood there. He stood there, shell-shocked. He wondered how the fuck he was going to show his face to Chisaki ever again, if Helmet had gone to die for him.

And, as he watched the vicious and desperate struggle of Helmet turn the tide, felt something stir inside of him. It was a feeling that he hadn’t felt since he was a kid wondering if a hero would finally save him from his drunk uncle.

Hope.

-

“For scumbags like us, there’s nothing to do and nothing to go for,” Setsuno explained, “so when we get taken in, we live and die for that person. It’s just how it is. That’s how you show your gratitude. I know that’s not really how people who walk in the light live, but that’s the only way scumbags like me know how to.”

Setsuno looked to Helmet. Was he sleeping? Was he listening? He didn’t know. However, holding this in his heart was heavy, and he didn’t know what to do with these thoughts. He couldn’t really say them to any of the people he came to. Half of them didn’t care what he thought and felt. The other half have already heard him say this a hundred thousand times and are sick of hearing him.

But Helmet may not be listening, so it was fine, wasn’t it? And even if he was listening in, he wasn’t going to say anything. If he was going to say something, he would have said it by now, wouldn’t he? Besides, it wouldn’t hurt to know more about the people that he saved, right?

With that thought in his mind, Setsuno thought that it was fine to talk and talk.

“I don’t really know the details, but Chisaki-sama was taken in by the Oyabun when he was a kid. Like, really took him in. Like, Kai was actually registered into his family, kind of took him in. It’s a super big deal, you see since usually, they’re just the little brats that run along in the compound.”

Setsuno’s eyes turned wistful, as though remembering something fond.

“...I’m not … really yakuza. I’m more of Chisaki-sama’s extra. He saved some worthless scumbag like me, so I knew then and there that I’ll devote myself to him. Death, and life, and all. To be honest, I don’t really get what it is that he wants, but I want it too. Anything that makes him want to live, I want it too. And maybe, if the guy that saved me and helped me out started looking forward to living again, I could too.”

He turned to Helmet again, a growing grin on his face to match the warmth in his chest. On him, he looked painfully young, as though he was just a kid with grand dreams.

“See, Helmet, you saved me but you didn’t know who I am. But Chisaki-sama saved me despite knowing what I am. And I don’t really get it, but you’re important to Chisaki-sama. That means that you’re important to me.”

He sighed deeply, laying down on his side. He yawned, as the events of the day slowly crept up.

“Wake me up when you want me to take the shift,” he said.

He slept through the whole night, however.

### **Music**

Jirou felt her jaw dislodge as her eyes trailed from Helmet to the sight in front of her.

She didn’t know what to expect when the man had brought her here. It was rare enough that someone would call her over, and even rarer that Helmet would call anyone over. She felt everyone’s eyes on her, and she could just hear Mineta’s words echoing through her head, again and again.

So really, the last thing she ever expected was that Helmet would take her to this room where there were a variety of instruments. It was clear that he had probably collected the instruments over time and stuck them all into this room, but her heart ached at the thought of feeling the vibrations under her fingers again.

“...Is this… for me?”

Helmet stared at her, or she assumed he was, since he was facing her. He brought his fist in front of her, and she stared at it blankly for a moment. She blinked twice and lifted her fist up and gave him an awkward fist-bump.

His hand remained as it was, so she was clearly wrong about this whole thing.

“I don’t…. Understand. Sorry,” she said quietly. Her eyes kept dragging back to the stacks of instruments, and that one guitar that stood on its stand. It was covered in dust. It looked untouched and uncared for many months.

It was beautiful.

Helmet tapped the back of her hand, gathering her attention back onto him. Right before she could blush, he opened his fist up to show her a key. She took it, confused, and that was all he needed to walk out like he was never a part of this.

Did… Did he just give her a key? To this room?

Her eyes trailed back to that guitar.

So this was okay, right?

### **Chisaki joins a run**

“Today, I will be joining you.”

He was smiling, but no one could tell with the facemask covering the bottom half of his face.

“Welcome! // I don’t want no dirty ikeman being with us!” Twice yelled out. Chisaki leaned away from him.

He looked to where Helmet was adjusting his backpack straps. He turned and walked away, and the blond that was hissing at him (but like seriously, who would literally hiss at him) turned around as he rushed after Helmet.

“Yosh! Helmet, where are we heading to today? How’s your arm by the way, are you doing alright? Well, you look like you’re in tip-top shape as always!”

The chatterbox walked next to the silent man, and Chisaki eventually started to follow. It was disjarring to leave without any fanfare, but he didn’t find it in himself to care too much. More importantly, he had hoped to use this as an opportunity to get closer to Helmet, even if it’s just a little bit. He needed to keep up and prove his worth.

He wouldn’t realize it for a while, but many others thought the exact same thing.

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Following Helmet was like chasing a dragonfly.

## Autumn - hospital run

### **Hospital Run**

In all honesty, Deku knew that they couldn’t live like this forever. It was too stagnant. However, now that everyone seemed to be more comfortable, he knew that this would be a good time to do something a little more daring.

More importantly, they had a little kid here now. And very quickly, he learned how little he knew about the world, especially children.

They still didn't have a doctor. Chisaki, as he kept stressing to everyone, was not a doctor. He was using his quirk to reset people. It was exhausting for him, no matter how he tried to act otherwise, so Deku didn't want to rely on it. He knows what that kind of dependency leads to. He doesn't want to let it happen, even if it would be easier to deal with.

Also.

He flexed his hand, the dull ache in his wrist was familiar but consuming. His hand was getting harder to move. The tremble in his hand was getting worse and worse. He couldn't feel the tips of his fingers anymore but he felt the wound pulsing in time with his heartbeat even when he slept.

He tried to be careful but everytime he thought he was better, he came home and realized that he had torn the wound open again. At this point, it just felt like a waste of resources. The disinfect, bandages, duct tape, ointments and water he used on it would never be returned and, more importantly, no one else would be able to use it.

A lot of people here don't leave. Meaning all the resources he uses or wastes are resources taken from everyone else. He doesn't want them to suffer because of his selfish desires.

And lastly.

He walked into their main dining area. It was the tail end of the dinner hour, and the people who weren't finishing their food were here to clean up the area. He was always impressed by how meticulously they all got into cleaning, but he supposed living with the Infection did that to people.

As always, Enji was one of the last people to eat, as was Shigaraki, who was the main person to deal with any and all leftover trash. However, different from usual, Fuyumi was eating with her father, and Tetsutesu, Kirishima, and Rappa were sitting at one of the other tables, arm-wrestling. There were others lingering about, but Deku paid them no mind as he approached Enji.

He stopped at the table, hesitating and feeling a little bad for interrupting his time with his daughter. Usually, familial reunions were painful since someone was always dying or infected, but even living and healthy relatives weren't well reciprocated.

He thought that it was sad. He doesn't know how to help, but to sit back and pretend nothing is wrong wasn’t the kind of person he wanted to be. He's no hero, and doesn't have any potential to become one, but he doesn’t know how to pretend that there isn’t a problem when it’s staring him in the face.

But everyone liked Heroes. That meant that there was one thing he could do.

"Oh, Helmet? Is there something wrong? Can we help you with anything?" Fuyumi said and Enji stared at him in shock.

This was it.

He placed the packet of papers under his arm down onto the table. And slid it over to them.

They both stared at the page, and Fuyumi gave an audible gasp. “...This is…” Her head snapped up to meet his gaze, eyes watering, “You’re going to try to go to the General Hospital?”

“I’m sorry, Helmet, you want to what?!”

Several of the others came swarming, and their dining table was suddenly swamped on all sides.

Helmet, however, kept facing Enji.

“...Are you… asking if I want to come?” the older man asked.

He nodded.

“If you are asking something of me,” the former hero said slowly, “The answer will always be yes.”

No one could see it, but Midoriya smiled. He was certain that this was the step in the right direction. With this, Enji would be stepping in the right direction. He would return, as bright and as vibrant as he was, just last year.

“Oh, Chisaki’s going to be pissed,” Rappa sighed back.

“Chisaki-san? Are you kidding me?” Kirishima repeated, looking at them in shock, “Aizawa-san is going to be livid.”

Tetsutetsu shook his head, “Oh man, how are we going to explain this to Sasaki-san?”

-

The General Hospital. If there were survivors, there should be medical personnel. If it was still standing, it might have a large amount of medical supplies.

But it was in a busier city. Since the end of the world, this would be the first real city that Deku was going to try.

### **D1 -> Hospital**

Supposingly, there was a group and they were going to leave early Thursday morning when the sun was beginning to peep up. It would give them about four days to prepare and make final decisions on who would come.

Helmet was present at the conversation. They were certain of that, yet he and a few others were nowhere to be seen the following morning.

“...He left, didn’t he?”

“Yeah.”

“Fuck,” Aizawa spat out.

-

Enji looked over his shoulder to where the base was and then back to Helmet in front of him.

Was this… okay?

He ran into the man when he felt too antsy to sleep. His first clue that something was up was that Helmet was heading out. However, unlike his usual get-up, he had a large dagger strapped to his thigh. His fire hydrant is a little smaller than usual, and his left arm looks bulkier than usual, as he had refortified it with more cardboard and duct tape on the outside of his sweater. He had two bats, and his bright yellow backpack had been replaced with something a little sleeker, with two belts wrapping around his chest. His regular camping back looked deflated, like there was nothing inside of it.

He was on his way out of the Rental Office, no doubt making his way to leave the apartment complex area.

Enji is certain that, if he didn’t see him in that moment, he would have been left behind like they had everyone else. What was the point of coming to him after dinner about this, if he wasn’t even going to wait for him to go?

He supposed it didn’t matter. He would never understand this man.

Once upon a time, he didn’t ever think that he would want to understand someone else.

-

He’s not shocked that Helmet decided to go alone, because the pace was brutal.

However, the strange man named Stain was with them. He panted hard, and glared daggers at Midoriya, but had yet to say a word. Enj could respect a man like that.

Hawks, because of course Hawks, was the one that caught up from the base, by the second day of their awful trek. He dropped a bag down, informing them that he had enough hindsight to pack some food and water. He had an easy grin and laid-back joke, but his eyes were sharp in a way that made Enji wary.

Still, they thanked him for the extra supplies, even though they don’t get a chance to drink.

At the end of the second day, after a 20 hour march, they hole up in a small house. It must have been a family home, and once upon a time, the greatest purchase that defined this family, but four strangers piled in to use it.

“I’m the least tired person here,” Hawks said, “I’ll take first watch. In about six hours, I’ll wake you up, big guy.”

“...No, wake me up, and I’ll keep an eye out until dawn,” Stain spoke up. Sharp eyes slid to Enji, “He still hasn’t caught his breath out.”

The blond grimaced. It was clear that he didn’t want to trust Stain with the watch-duty, when the door opened and Helmet came in with blankets. He passed them out, and when he got to Hawks, the man caught his wrist.

“Hey, I’ll take first watch, so why don’t you-”

The smaller man snatched his hand back. Grabbing a pillow to pass to the blond, he waved at them before closing the door as he left.

“...He’s not going to take watch, is he?” Enji asked.

“No way,” Hawks said, staring at the pillow in his lap. “...Right?”

Without word on their itinerary, or even an explanation concerning how to divy up their defenses, the remaining adults sat around the living room.

Without another word, Stain got up and left as well.

-

“...Nee, Endeavor-san,” Hawks spoke up. The older man swallowed the urge to correct him, since neither of them were on-duty anymore. He kept his mouth shut, and the blond continued, “...Why do you think he left without plans?”

“Maybe he didn’t hear our plan,” Endeavor reasoned, but it was weak even to his own ears. “Or rather, he heard it and thought he had to act first.”

The blond shook his head, “I… I don’t get it though. Why not just say anything?” he said.

It was clear that neither of them were going to get an answer. Sitting around and cycling through questions and theories like this would not provide them with an answer. The only person that could provide them with an answer was someone that dumped a bunch of blankets here and left.

### **Hospital - side: Enji & Rei**

It was a strange feeling, the oppressive feeling that her chances of survival were minimal was wiped clean the moment she saw that fire. Standing in the entrance way of the broken door, summer blue eyes that she used to hate looked back at her.

As it turned out, being saved by Endeavor was a completely different feeling in comparison to seeing Enji come home. Her breath caught, because he looked awful, and her husband stared back at her in open mouth shock.

“There you are,” he said, as though he had been looking for her.

Who was this, she wondered? Endeavor would never look so desperate. Enji would never look that lost.

“...Is this everyone?” he asked, his voice low. “Is anyone hurt?”

“This … This is all of us,” the person next to Rei said. She couldn’t put a name to a face, couldn’t put a voice to a person. “N-Nothing strenuous, but we have a few people who cannot walk.”

“...I see,” Enji nodded back. “Helmet and I will ensure that every monster out there is killed and accounted for. It will be a gruesome scene. Please stay here while we do that.”

W-Wait, if, if you’re here, Endeavor-san, is-is help here? Is there a safe space?”

The man stared at them and shook his head, “I’m sorry, but I don’t carry the news that you are looking for.”

The man’s face fell while Enji continued to speak.

“We will not force your cooperation. Make your decision, if you would like to come back with us or if you would like to stay here instead.”

It was a cold sentiment, since it was obvious what these people were waiting for. It was a cold sentiment, but it warmed Todoroki Rei’s heart greatly.

The apocalypse could not break Enji, she thought. He was still as she remembered him.

### **Hospital - side: Deku**

Deku stared at the syringe. It was probably really inappropriate to do this right now, but as far as he’s concerned, he doesn’t know anything. He doesn’t know if the vaccine will help get rid of it, or if tetanus is something that makes the vaccine ineffective after some time.

Actually…. Was this even tetanus? He just assumed it would be, since it was infected and a rusty nail did the damage. What if he was wrong this whole time? Fuck.

In fact, he doesn’t even know how to use a syringe. He hasn’t been to the doctor’s office in ages, and all the times he remembered getting vaccinated ended with him crying all the way home.

His fingers twitched. Was it bad if he punched in the wrong vaccine? Well, getting any exposed skin out from all his padding and his clothes sucked as it was. He looked to his bare arm, a mess of blood and half-formed skin, and then to the vaccines he had out.

Well, one way to find out.

Deku didn’t want to die. Not yet. He still had things he wanted to do. There were people that depended on him. He had a good idea on how to do it, and figured this will be fine.

If at all possible, he hopes that he could meet that Doctor again, and let him know that he didn’t cry when he got the shots anymore, even when he missed, and even when his fingers slipped and he nearly ripped out a chunk of his skin. He would like to think that the doctor would be proud.

Instead of the All Might bandaids for a starry-eye kid, he duct tapes his wounds closed.

-

"Well… a lot of the medicine is at the bottom floor supplies."

He looked uncertain .

"We put many of the… undead down there."

Enji blanched and Helmet nodded like he was expecting it. In that instant, Enji knows what he’s going to do.

-

Deku was fine with this. He came here knowing that this would be the case.

He was so incredibly grateful that he came here with someone. He can just leave the survivors to them and he can go do the one thing he's useful for.

Unable to die, unable to live, Deku gets to the bottom floor, where an unknown but rather large number of walkers are locked behind.

He opened his hand and then closed it back into a fist. He could still feel it as well as it could have. He doesn’t know what he was going to do with himself if this wasn’t tetanus. Then, he wasted several, perfectly good shots on himself. Well, regardless, he couldn’t pretend that he didn’t know what was here now that he did. He stared at the door, seemingly innocent except for the chains keeping it shut.

He picked up the bolt cutters.

It’s fine, he reminds himself, he can’t get infected. He’s padded enough, so at the very least, he will survive the fight here.

He pushed the doors open, allowing the first signs of light to embrace all the undead that the hospital staff managed to stuff down there. He tapped his bat on the ground, took a deep breath, and started. They converged on him at once.

### **Return - Hawks & Deku**

"Hey, if you're planning on dying, you'd let me know, right?"

Hawks felt like he was unraveling at the seams. He's been feeling like that, actually, since before all of this started, but it hadn't gotten this bad in a while. His hands trembled, his smile falling apart as he took a shaky step towards him.

"Don't save anyone if you can't take responsibility for it."

His hand shot out to grab Helmet's shoulder, slamming him up against the wall. His grin promised pain, a far-cry from the hero he used to be hailed as.

"If you're not going to let me die, then you better be here as well."

It would be so easy to tear that helmet off his head right now. He could expose Helmet's face to his eyes and then hold this against him forever. He wanted to ensure that he could never leave, the same way that Hawks would never leave.

He jerked backwards when something came swinging at him. Regretfully, he also released Helmet, and his expression returned to his default easy smile.

Standing between them, Stain narrowed his eyes at Hawks.

"Rather unbecoming of a hero, don't you think?"

“I really don’t want to hear that from you.”

Helmet suddenly stood up and pushed past Stain. He made his way through the doors behind Hawks and left like nothing happened.

It was the part that both of them hated the most about him.

### **Return - Todoroki**

Todoroki Rei found a new home in this strange place, and at the center of the apocalypse, her entire family was reunited.

“...Touya…?”

Dabi stared at her for a moment before he gave a long-suffering sigh. “Nah lady, sorry, but I’m not your dead kid. Why don’t you pay attention to the kids that are alive instead.”

She stared at him for another moment, her hands coming up to her mouth. “...Oh, Touya.”

“...I feel bad for this Touya-kid,” Dabi sighed, his grin looking absolutely cruel, “Look at how willing his folks are to replace him.”

-

“...Did you think that… just because you saved mom, we are going to suddenly forgive you and be this… this happily functioning family? Even though you were the one to send her away to begin with?”

“Natsuo!” Fuyumi admonished in return.

“I can’t,” Natsuo said quietly, “I can’t just… forgive and forget.”

No, Enji agreed with his son, that would be too easy. And from the way Natsuo couldn’t even meet his eyes, he knew that it wouldn’t be the case.

Still.

He doesn't think he’ll ever forget the surprised smile on Rei’s face, when he knocked down that hospital room to get her out. In fact, he dared to think that, at the end of the world, he was the one who had been saved.

-

"...My thanks, Helmet," Enji said quietly. "I will never forget what you have done for me. I-"

Helmet walked right by him, as though he didn't even speak at all

To be treated so disrespectfully, for someone to just walk out while he was expressing his gratitude, has never happened before. It was staggering to believe that there was someone in the world who was willing to risk everything for a potential lost cause, succeed, and then blatantly ignore any sense of glory or even thanks offered.

It's humbling and humiliating all at once.

### **Post hospital - deku’s injury**

Was he better? Was he worse? He truly had no idea.

Deku knew that people sometimes got fevers because medicine was working. He also knew that sometimes people got worse before they got better. He honestly doesn’t remember which one he was anymore.

His stomach twisted violently. He leaned against the wall, trying his best to remain standing. At the very least, in the comfort of this small apartment, he could remove the helmet.

### **Dabi & Endeavor**

“I thought that I would be happy as long as I got to see you suffer,” Dabi admitted.

“...Touya,” Enji’s voice was quiet, unlike what Dabi remembered. He sighed as he rubbed the back of his neck.

“I’m not Touya. Don’t just replace your kid like that,” he snapped back, but his tone wasn’t nearly as harsh as it used to be.

There was a beat of silence, and Dabi took a deep breath.

“To be honest, when you came in on the back of the cart, I couldn’t believe it. I didn’t think that there was anything that could actually smack you around like that. I thought that, since you finally lost everything, I would be happy but…” he trailed off. Blue eyes looked to the starry night above them, “I didn’t feel anything.”

Enji stared, his eyes a shade brighter as hope framed them.

“You and I, we’re just strangers now,” Dabi said. “Strangers that met after the world turned to shit. You and I, we mean nothing to each other anymore.” A wide grin stretched across his face, making him look painfully younger from a time where the journey home was the longest part of the day. “So friendly word of advice? There’s no more heroes anymore. You’re not a hero anymore. Go be dad to the kids you still have.”

This wasn’t forgiveness. This wasn’t mercy. This was a goodbye that Enji never got before.

Enji felt his eyes water, but it felt inappropriate to cry. It didn’t feel like it made sense for him to cry. As the person who single-handedly twisted and tore his family into the mess it was, it made no sense for him to cry. Could someone mourn the destruction that they caused?

Looking at the Stranger Named Dabi, he hoped that he could be as strong as that.

“We’re all on the same side, at this point,” Dabi said, giving a wave over his shoulder, “I’ll see you around, old man.”

### **Deku & Endeavor - working hard**

Deku peered at Endeavor from inside the helmet. The man was working hard.

He had learned a lot about Enji, the same way everyone else on base had, since the family had come back together. He couldn’t imagine the torturous pain they went through, made even more mocking because a hero had done it. Something that Deku could look at and clearly state that it was ‘wrong’ and ‘terrible’ was someone else’s life.

It made his heart twist.

At the same time, Deku felt like it was hypocritical to pass judgement on anyone when it wasn’t like he had the cleanest history. He didn’t want to think about the debacle between if it was better to abuse your family or kill a family, because they were both inherently bad. Bad was bad. It wasn’t a bunch of levels, and it wasn’t something that he could compare like that.

To begin with, Deku didn’t have the energy to waste on things like that. Once he started to try and prioritize and categorize things to be measured up against each other, he wouldn’t stop. And then, through inaction or subconscious, he would do something he would regret.

So Deku did what Deku always did.

He tried to help the people in arm’s reach.

-

Enji looked up when a water bottle came in front of him.

“...Helmet,” the older man said as a greeting.

The man, if he heard him, ignored him but unlike usual, moved to lean against the wall across the street. Enji took the water bottle, understanding the implications and drank it.

“Thank you,” he said. He wasn’t unreasonably parched, but he didn’t think it was right to refuse this man in any way, shape, or form. “I’m sure you’ve heard by now. The man I am.”

Helmet, as always, didn’t respond.

### **Enter: Toyomitsu Taishiro: Fat Gum**

If he was

-

“...It’s okay,” Aizawa said slowly, “Eat as much as you want.”

He can’t imagine what it was like to have a quirk so dependent on eating, like Sato or Yaoyorozu, especially in times like this. For a Pro like Fat Gum, who relies on having fat and instinctively tries to save lives, he must have had a rough time. Being hungry could really mess with someone, and as a hero known for his appetite, it would have been awful.

Case and point, here he was, several hundred of kilometers from his regular base.

It was made even worse when he saw the hesitance lace through him. The happy-go-lucky man that he once did undercover missions with, all those years ago, seemed so far away. Inappropriately enough, he felt a little older, and a stirring of anger at their entire situation.

“Is it… really okay?” he asked, a shadow of the confident man he once was.

“Yeah,” Aizawa nodded, “There’s plenty of food to go around. If you feel bad about it,” he tilted his head and smirked at him, “then you can join us on the frontlines.”

Toyomitsu stared for a moment longer before a familiar grin stretched on his face instead. It was a pathetic thing, a fraction of the radiance he used to be, but the thought that Toyomitsu had the strength to smile made something loosen in Aizawa’s chest in relief.

“Sounds great!”

### **Mido’s Lowkey Dying**

Deku, vaguely, thinks that he’s dying. It wasn’t this soul-crushing revelation, and it wasn’t a blessing. It was just something he realized when he woke up one day and when he leaned down to pick up his helmet, felt it slip right out of his hand. The realization settled on his heart like a blanket of snow, muffling the shock and leaving him cold.

It was now just another problem that he would have to deal with.

He couldn’t feel his arm. Before it was a numbing, throbbing sensation, but he could still feel it. When he swung and his blood stained his sleeve, he could feel the wetness. Now, he couldn’t feel anything anymore.

It wasn’t infected anymore. He knew that. There was no more oozing and there were no pus. But the mess of scars that were finally beginning to heal, so he doesn’t get it. He opened his hand and then he closed it into a fist. He couldn’t close his hand all the way, and his entire arm trembled at the strain. It took all his focus to do so.

This was bad.

-

He felt awful for thinking this, but he was glad that there were others to come out with him.

Of course, he doesn't want them to. He doesn't want to subjugate them to whatever traumas they face on the outside. Many of them have finally started to laugh and smile again. The shadows that haunted their starving features have subsided into something a little more healthy, a little more alive.

Deku wanted to protect that.

At no point were they supposed to be satisfied with being here, but Deku doesn't have the heart to kick them out. However, if they want to stay, then he will need to go.

With his arm like this, it was only a matter of time before he was just deadweight. And, more importantly, he doesn't know what he will become when he dies. The best case scenario, he'll just be a corpse.

His heart ached. Despite all his grand ideals, he doesn't want to leave them.

He shook his head. Winter was rapidly approaching and he needed to decide how much longer he can handle this lie. He needs to leave before he can no longer function, so he can get the duck away and ensure that his body, regardless of its state, will be properly disposed of. He doesn't want anyone to find it or even know that he just died.

Is it better to know that someone’s dead or was it better to think they’ll come home? He still doesn’t know.

Regardless, he doesn't want to leave a half-assed job for everyone here to be forced to deal with.

Again, he's so grateful for Chisaki. Again, he feels nothing but guilt. These feelings continued to mix about in his heart, leaving room for nothing else.

But, he thinks as he begins to duct tape his bat to his hand, this was better for everyone. They don’t know him. Even if he dies, he’s hard pressed to think that they would notice or care. They’ll be fine. They have each other.

-

The first thing that they noticed was that Helmet was late. That, or they weren’t going to go clear out the area they were in yesterday. It wasn’t like Helmet to leave something like that completely undone, but right when they thought that they had just missed him completely, he came down the stairs.

A late day then.

The thought provided little comfort, but could be dismissed as Helmet didn’t see it as a threat that was worth worrying about. They could take their time with it and not fear repercussions.

Still, seeing that his bat was already out and duct taped to his hand, brought uncomfortable questions up instead.

Why would he need to duct tape the bat to his hand? What were they going to do today that he needed to duct tape his bat to his hand?

Their mute benefactor, as always, didn’t even seem to regard them as he walked right past them and out of their compound space. Even though he did this every single day, every single time, it never failed to bother them.

All of these thoughts and feelings evaporated instantly when they saw Helmet conduct himself as though nothing had changed. If anything, his swings seemed to be even stronger, and there was less time wasted between swings.

“Damn, Helmet’s badass as always,” Twice whistled as they approached the next area.

While Helmet took care of the Walkers in the area, going as far as taking a lap around the block to double check, Twice and the others ransacked the store. They wore gloves and gathered the bodies into one location, and set everything on fire.

It was a lot more therapeutic than it sounded.

### **Flowers**

“I think flowers will be great! Because then everyone walking by them will feel happy because they see them!”

It was a sweet idea. Clearly, it was something that a child would think of, and the idea behind it was precious. However, reality was a little harder than that.

“Eri, don’t bother Kurono with things like this,” Chisaki’s voice was curt and cold as always. She was glad that he was in good health, even if it was annoying. Kurono gave her a sympathetic look, but she was already out the door. Stupid Chisaki.

“Sorry, Eri-hime,” Setsuno said, apologetically, “I have to help with construction.”

“My deepest apologies, Eri-hime,” Nemoto sighed, shaking his head, “I’m afraid that I will be useless in this venture. I must go help take inventory.”

“Ah, sorry about that Eri-chan, but I don’t really know anything about the area and I don’t know where to plant them,” Fuyumi said, an apologetic smile on her face. “Maybe we can figure it out together later. Right now, do you want to stay in and read instead?”

But Eri didn’t want to read. She didn’t want to study. She didn’t want to play or eat or cook or clean or whatever. She didn’t want to try on new clothes and parade around in them. She wanted to help out. Almost everyone is always talking about how important it was to work for their stay, but Eri knew that she hadn’t done anything yet.

Just like Dabi said. She was just a drain on the resources.

But she wasn’t strong and she wasn’t smart, so she didn’t know what she could do. But, maybe, if she could put a smile on everyone’s face, make the lights in their eyes dance when they saw flowers, she would be useful enough.

Then she could even ask for canided apples.

Imagine her shock when a bag suddenly dropped in front of her. It was a small ziplock, labeled with “seeds” on them, and there were several grams collected seeds. She stared at it, in awe, and looked up to the person who dropped them in front of her.

Helmet, with a baseball bat taped to his hand and a fire hydrant on his thigh, stood in front of her.

“Is this… for me?”

He nodded.

“Do you.. Are you going to come with me?”

He nodded again.

Her eyes welled with tears.

A hero was a strange man in a helmet that drove Chisaki to scream noncoherently when he thought he was alone.

“I-I’ll get ready right now!”

He nodded again and pointed at the door.

“Should I… meet you there?”

He nodded once more and she felt like she would burst open with how happy she felt. She leapt up to her feet and rushed away to her lodgings. What would she need? A snack and water right? Maybe a pail?

No wait, if Helmet had invited her, with his regular yellow backpack, it was clear that he was probably completely prepared. With newfound confidence, she just grabbed on of her bags to place the small bag of seeds in.

She’d protect them. With her life.

-

“Huh? Eri-chan? Where are you going?”

Kurono, who was finishing up the work for the day and returning the updated reports on their current construction projects back to the Rental Office, paused in his steps as he heard some of the younger tenants call out to the boss’ daughter. He turned, his frown becoming apparent, as he saw little Eri walking towards the gates.

“I’m going on a walk!” Eri replied back, her rosy cheeks darkening under her excitement.

Still, her cheer did nothing but bring a cold tide of dread into Kurono. He didn’t think twice and sprinted to where she was standing.

“That’s pretty dangerous,” the kid replied back.

“Nuh-uh. Helmet is taking me!”

While Kurono would believe someone if they said that Helmet was the strongest and most likely to survive anything, it only made the pit in his gut deepen.

Oh fuck no.

“Wait, Eri-hime!”

She turned over her shoulder, her complexion brightening at the sight of Kurono. And then, slowly remembering how Kurono had been refusing to play with her since he was busy with the construction, turned away with a pout instead.

“I’m not talking to you, Kuro-baka! You’re a meanie-head!”

He winced, but he could not let, under any circumstance, this go.

“I… am sorry about that, hime-sama,” he said, slipping into the most polite terms he could. He bowed deeply before he crouched down in front of her. “But there is no need to be rash. Please let us know if you want to leave the premises-”

“I am leaving the premises,” Eri replied back, cutting him off.

“Does Kai know?” Kurono almost snapped back, far-cry from his regular, calm demeanor.

“... I might have… forgotten to tell him.”

“Then you need to go and tell him right now.”

“No, then he’ll say I can’t go! But Helmet is waiting!”

Kurono acutely wondered if this is how people felt when they were stuck between their boss and their boss’s boss. What was the correct thing to do? No, the best thing to do would have been to ignore this situation when it occurred and then play ignorance when it inevitably blew up in his face. Plausible deniability and all of that.

He racked his mind for the best possible solution in this case. He wasn’t the right-hand for nothing, and he came with a fast answer. If you can’t stop the crime, join it, or so the saying goes.

“Then, give me just a moment. Let me join you.”

“Noooooo,” Eri whined. Ste stamped her feet while declaring, “This is my time with Helmet!”

“Then I’m going to go tell Kai.”

She pouted at him, and after a long moment, relented.

“Hari-jii,” she said, “You’re not a meanie-head. You’re a party-pooper. And a cheater. You NTR trashbag.”

Kurono gave an exhausted sigh. “And where did you learn that?”

She gave an unrepentant grin, “Twice!”

“You really shouldn’t spend so much time with them…”

-

As promised, Deku was waiting by the entrance. Unlike the promise, however, Shigaraki was standing with him.

“...Huh, there is a way to make you wait for someone,” the older man said.

### **Deku’s Injury - Walk It Off**

With their quirks finally responding as they remembered it to, fighting had gotten much easier.

And during this time, they had gotten arrogant.

Normally, the worst of the monsters only came out at night. When the sun was high up in the sky, the worst that they dealt with were essentially zombies. Former humans that wandered the world, unable to die, but definitely not alive.

The only thing that they should have had to worry about, while the sun beat down on them, was zombies.

They forgot to account for the fact that humans could be crafty people. And when someone was desperately trying to survive, it was only natural to forget about the consequences.

-

“...What the fuck is that?!”

A blur of yellow came sweeping past their vision, a backpack crashing into the body of the zombie. It stumbled before falling backwards, and the other ones around it moved forward. Helmet came in not a moment later. His bat swung hard against the head of one zombie, crushing its skull like it was candy, and continued into a spin to get a clean hit on the next one.

He dropped low, sliding on the blood splattered on the ground to adjust his stance and swing against the leg of the next. He jerked backwards, lifting his bat up before smashing it onto the head of the next one. The bat shattered the nose of the rotting body, and then the skull as it lodged itself into the face.

Wasting no time, he yanked the bat backwards and kicked the corpse into the shambling ones behind it. Predictably, the others turned to start chowing down on it, and Helmet took advantage of that distraction.

With every swing, the heads popped like tomatoes, splattering thick and dark blood across the walls and floor.

Eventually, Helmet had dispatched the entire group that came out like that.

Tensei stared, his mouth slackening in his shock at how efficiently Helmet moved, even though his swings were wide and slow. This was someone who clearly made every move he made count, and had a lot of experience to know exactly what he could get away with. Given his statue, Tensei had expected Helmet to rely on speed more than his power, but he was clearly wrong.

“Holy shit,” Yamada gasped next to him. “Oh my god, I thought we were going to die.”

Tensei, who had taken a bad fall on his back, grimaced. He was starting to get feeling in his fingers again, even though it was tingly. He would be able to get back up and walk home, but he didn’t think he would be very reliable to do anything else.

“Man, what took you so long?” the blond next to him whined, “Like, thanks for coming to save our asses, but that was really cutting it close, don’t you think?”

His voice trailed off, as Helmet remained standing, facing forward. Even though there were no other enemies, he didn’t turn around. Instead, one of his hands came up to his ribs and the two former pros realized that there was blood dripping off his elbow. Unlike the blood around him, it was bright red, glistening and wet as it dripped to the ground.

“...Helmet?” Yamada tried again, “Are you… hurt?”

Immediately, the worst-case scenario began to fill Tensei’s head. If they lost Helmet, that was the end. He had no doubt that there were several people on base that would go on a carnage rampage. His own health and safety was no longer a concern. The condition that Helmet is in will literally decide if their base will be standing tomorrow.

He tried to force himself up, when Helmet kneeled down next to the bodies and began rummaging around their pockets. The man moved so smoothly that, for a moment, they thought that they had seen wrong.

Helmet was fine. He stood up without a problem, and walked without a limp. He didn’t lean more towards one side than another, and he fought as he always did, brutal and efficient.

So desperate to believe that nothing was wrong, they assumed that they had observed wrong.

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The rest of the patrol went without a hitch. As far as injuries went, everyone was expected to take the following two days off to recuperate. The only exception to that was Tensei, who would be out for a week to make sure his back recovered fully.

-

“Well uh… Guess he’s fine then,” Setsuno noted, seeing Helmet the following day.

There was a rumor going around that Helmet probably had some regeneration quirk. These moments supported that idea. After all, he moved just like they remembered him to. He wasn’t limping or favoring one side over the other, and he came out to join the patrols like nothing was wrong.

“Ah, Helmet, are you uh… well? Heard you took a bad fall,” Twice, who was always one of the first to greet Helmet, said brightly.

The man, as always, didn’t respond.

Instead, he walked right past Twice, as though the man didn’t say anything at all, and made his way off their base.

“Guess he’s fine,” Twice said with a big sigh. He turned over his shoulder, “Well, as expected, right? If that was enough to do him in, we’re all fucked.”

Dabi kept his eyes on Helmet, blue eyes seeming to pierce right through the helmet.

“...Yeah, you’re right. We would be,” he said nonchalantly.

“Hm? Dabi, you say something?”

“No,” the man said, “C’mon, we’re getting left behind.”

“That’s cuz you started muttering!” Twice hissed back, “ // I bet you were abandoned as a kid!”

“I’m sure you were too,” the scarred man muttered back, already on his way out.

## Autumn - police run

### **Police (Pre)**

Aizawa, Yamada, Inui, Twice, Tsukauke

By complete happenstance, he stumbled onto a radio.

At first, he just heard something resembling a voice and just ran for it. It was behind a door, and with a good swing from his bat, the doorknob fell off. He kicked it down without fanfare, and the door slammed open to reveal a man in a police uniform behind him.

It used to be a man, at least. However, Deku didn’t spend all his time beating the shit out of the undead for nothing, he felt as though there was something different about this man than the other undead that he smashed. It turned to him, alarmingly fast, and he realized it.

This guy was recent. He wasn’t decaying nearly as bad as everything else outside. This was someone who had recently been turned. He ducked under the first swing. It had been a long time since he found something with more parts attached then dangling, and moved quickly.

But with his arm being what it was, it took much longer than he had hoped to get three clean hits to the head. The skull caved inwards, and it stopped moving, sprawled on the ground. He gave it another good whack just to be certain.

He looked around the room. There were three other dead ones here. Two were missing arms and the last was missing legs. All of them had several wounds lacing their body, and they kept opening and closing their jaws at him. Dispatching them with ease, he took a moment and understood the situation.

From the way they were, it was clear that the former policeman had gotten bit trying to deal with these three.

Deku felt his stomach roll, but once he was certain that none of them wouldn’t move again, bent down to rummage through the former policeman’s pockets and pull out his ID.

It wasn’t cold enough for him to think that flesh wouldn’t decompose quickly. The days were blistering hot sometimes, but the nights could be considered mild. Often, he feels like he’s so sick or so hot that he can’t see clearly. Given that, the amount of decomposition that the former officer in front of him had made no sense.

Unless…

His eyes fell to the radio strapped to the man’s side.

He grabbed it, and again, he heard it. This was it. The voice that he drew him here.

“Please! Answer me! Are you okay? Where are you?”

Oh god, he thinks. His heart was aching for someone that he didn’t even know. His eyes burned, and he didn’t even know that he had tears left to shed. However, he looked at the ID in his hand, and knew what he needed to do.

He needed to give them closure. Waiting for someone who couldn’t come back was hard. He should at least tell them the truth. They could draw their own conclusions.

As it turns out, and he hated to think of it like this, this policeman could have been saved. While this man was fighting for his life here, what was Deku doing? Last night? Wasn’t he making peace with death again or something?

And while he was making peace with death, this man was robbed of his life. He just. This man could have been human, could have died a human. He could have been returned to the person that was calling for him. He could have…

“Please, please, please, answer me!”

No matter. Deku took a deep breath. The radio was clearly put on a low sound-setting, possibly to stop attracting attention or to save battery.

“We’re still where we are, okay? We didn’t move from the station! So, don’t worry. Just come back. Please, just come back. We just-” it clicked, and no matter what he did or how he tried to fiddle with it, it wouldn’t say or play anything. Shit. He should be glad that it had lasted this long at all, because otherwise, he wouldn’t have known.

It's begging for help. They, the someone who was waiting for the guy Deku bashed the skull of, was waiting. They're at the local, he assumed, police station. From what he gathered, this man went out to get some supplies or help. Regardless, however, they’re begging for help.

And Deku couldn’t pretend that he didn’t know after that.

“Hey, Helmet!” Yamada called out, jogging up the stairs, “We heard some loud sounds! You need some help?!”

Deku didn’t even look at him as he pushed past him. Someone was waiting. He didn’t want them to wait any longer than they had to.

-

Aside from the strenuous situations where survivors are found, they do not ever return in the middle of a scavenge. So when Helmet suddenly crossed through the clearing, heading back to the complex, they were tripping over their own feet to catch up.

Normally, he moved at a brisk walk, or a slow walk as he carefully snuck up and around the things that lingered in his neighborhood. He jogged when he was going through a complex or retracing their steps back home, and he sprinted only when he was approaching a fight or when someone was in immediate danger.

With how he moved, it definitely felt like he knew exactly how much he could and wanted to handle. He moved exactly enough and avoided expending more energy than he had.

But he was at a jog. He jogged all the way back to the compound, while they were still trying to figure out what he was doing. They caught up with minimal difficulties, although they didn’t know if he was holding back on their account or not.

Anyone who has seen Helmet move could testify to the near infinite-level of stamina he had.

Regardless, this was still something that they have never seen before.

As soon as the complex was visible, Helmet started to sprint the rest of the way back. Was something wrong? Did they completely and utterly miss something?

In the back of his mind, the part of Aizawa that wasn’t convinced that Helmet’s quirk was physically based wondered if perhaps Helmet’s quirk made it so that he could just find trouble. A trouble-magnet, that would be Helmet’s quirk. Everything would make sense too.

At Helmet’s sprinting speed, Aizawa (and most of the others) could still keep up, but the long-term sprint was something that they had lost on. He didn’t realize how much his stamina had diminished because of this, and made a mental note that they would have to work on this.

“What’s wrong?” Ectoplasm asked as soon as they came into eyeshot, “Helmet’s running like the devil himself is on his heels.”

“I wish I could tell you,” Aizawa said, panting hard.

The former teachers stared at him and nodded. “No complications?”

“None, as far as we’re concerned, Helmet there just turned around and left mid scavenge.”

Ectoplasm’s stilled, doing his best to make sense of this entire situation, “But no reason why?”

“None that we could see,” Aizawa said, shaking his head. “But he got to this… room, you see? Four bodies in there, all of them infected. I don’t… Maybe it has something to do with that-”

“Dabi! Shigaraki!” Twice shouted out as he ran in, “Hey! Helmet needs help!”

And just like that, several heads seemed to turn around.

“What’s going on?” Iguchi asked, arriving at the scene first.

The blond, bent over his knees as he caught his breath, took in a huge breath. “I don’t know! But he only moves like that when the dogs are barking, you know? // Helmet’s going to die!”

-

Helmet had dropped his backpack by the Rental Office before he ran up to his apartment complex. In a few moments, he had another bag and another bat.

Hawks poked his head out, his wings folding neatly against his back as he rested against the doorway and watched the young man run right past him.

“Helmet, you’re back early…” his voice trailed when the man ran by him. It wasn’t like he was a stranger to being ignored, but he liked to think that they had gotten sorta better than this.

When he made his way down the stairs, meandering behind Helmet as his wings fluttered anxiously. It was never a good thing if he was this rushed. He turned away, moving to start making preparations on his end. Right as he did, he caught Enji’s eye down the way and gave a curt nod to the man.

Below, Helmet makes it back to the Rental Office.

He has two bottles of water and a box of granola bars from who knows where in his bag. It’s a small pack, but it wraps around him tightly and doesn’t seem to move much on his back, like his usual bag. He has two bats and a large knife strapped to the thigh that doesn’t have a fire extinguisher. In addition to that, he’s duct-taping the edges of his sleeves of his pants leg down and to his shoes as well.

The look Hakamata gives when he sees that would have made them laugh, if they weren’t so focused on what it was that Helmet was doing.

He eventually tapes down his gloves to his hand, and tapes his neck area. It minimizes all of the already not-exposed skin, and looked to provide a little more support around his joints. A growing amount of dread continued to build. He stared at the maps for a couple of long minutes, and then he finally left.

He’s broke out into a jog, and doesn’t bother slowing down.

Hawks, Endeavor, Twice , Stain, Spinner, and Tsukauchi quickly join him. The others were left in the dust. They didn’t know where he was going, but they were certain that where ever he was going, it was going to be dangerous.

45 minutes after they left, Dabi and Shigaraki came out from various parts of the base, and when they asked what the huge commotion was about, was told that Helmet left for some emergency or another.

### **Police Run**

They had all known that Helmet had insane stamina.

Chasing someone, especially in a situation where they didn’t know where they were going, burned more stamina than most people assume. The confusion concerning their destination and the trip in general weighed heavily against them. It was even worse because Helmet did not give them direction.

They ran after him voluntarily. They choose to follow him out, without knowing the situation, because they wanted to be of assistance since it looked like Helmet was sprinting for their life. It was probably arrogant to think that they could do anything at all, but the thought that they haven’t even begun to repay Helmet back was humiliating.

So when Helmet finally slowed down, the only person who didn’t look like he was tired at all was Hawks and Stain. Figures.

Helmet paused for a moment, peering out and around the corner and then turned back to them. He took his small backpack off, the only indication to them that shit was going to get real right now, and turned to leave the corridor.

Or he would have, except he jerked to a stop. He turned right back to them. He opened his hand up to them, as though to tell them to stop, and they stared back at him. He made the motion several times, and Twice finally spoke up.

“You want us to stay here?” he asked, hissing it out incredulously.

Helmet nodded his head, and then moved his fingers to hold up three digits instead.

“You want us to wait three minutes?” the blond clarified.

He nodded again. And then reached into one of his pockets on his pants to grab something and he handed it to Tsukauchi. The older man stared at it in absolute shock.

“Where did you…” he asked, unable to find the words to describe the weight of the metal in his hand.

By then, Helmet had already moved on. He rummaged through his bag with his free hand, and pulled out an air horn. He looked at it, his bat, and then back to the others before giving a nod.

“Wait, that’s it-”

And Helmet ran out of the alleyway at full speed. He ran for a couple of blocks and then lifted his hand up to blare the airhorn.

Even though they were expecting it, the shock of that sudden, loud sound was enough to make them all flinch. Outside like this, making sounds made people vulnerable, but there Helmet went, making the most amount of noise this side of the neighborhood has ever heard in a very long time.

But as promised, three minutes passed and they poked their head out. There was a large horde just shuffling and shambling towards the center of the air-horn sounded. It was a little further away, and quieter because of it, and when they realized what Helmet had handed to Tsukauchi and what they were standing in front of, understood what Helmet wanted from them.

Tsukauchi held the police badge in his hand, the sunlight reflecting off of it, and they stared at the police station in front of them.

“Tsukauchi-san?”

Staring through the glass was a younger officer.

-

“Wow, I-I can’t believe that you’re… that you’re still-”

“Yes,” Tsukauchi said, his heart tight as he took in the man in front of him. “Yes, I’m glad you made it.”

-

Among the survivors, Helmet suddenly reaches into his pocket to pull out an ID. He placed it onto the table and stepped away. The others crowded it and one of the women broke down into tears.

“Oh god,” she said, “Oh my god… did he die?”

Helmet nodded. The blood on his bat was still dripping.

“Oh god… Oh god…”

Briefly, Spinner wondered if Helmet had found the badge, the ID, and just knew to come to the place where that person had someone who was waiting for him. And this way, they wouldn’t have to wait any longer. He thinks that, even if the woman was acting the way she was, it was a blessing in disguise.

The thoughts lingered in his head, and gave way to the thought that, perhaps, Helmet had a quirk or something that made it easier for him to find people who were waiting.

-

“...You know, Best Jeanist is about ready to start begging you to let him make you something,” Tsukauchi said as he approached the young man in the helmet, “Maybe you should talk to him about making you something.”

Said man was currently putting on one of the police vests. It was clear that he was trying it on, but it was times like this that Tsukauchi thought that Helmet was much thinner than he thought. He put the vest on top of everything else he was wearing, and it was still much too large. The arm holes hung far low, and the bottom of the vest went to his thighs. It was moments like this when he thinks that Helmet is much smaller than he feels. And it unnerves him more than he would like to think, especially since he can’t help but worry.

Also because he was getting sick of being harassed over things he had no control over.

The man in the helmet gave a soft breath, like he was annoyed by the whole ordeal.

“Yo, Big Boss Helmet, we’re about ready to eat lunch and head out,” Twice said, coming into the office. “Ooh? Getting a new suit! I’m totally digging the look! // Not really, it’s ugly.”

-

Kaniyashiki Monika and Tamakawa Sansa...

### **Pol Survivors -> return home**

When the impromptu team returned, everyone was alerted when almost all of the dogs sprinted for the doors. It was still unnerving for most of them to see that many dogs run around, but with so many days without incident, they were getting used to it.

“Hey, we got some survivors!”

Indeed, the remaining four survivors that were in the police station all came with them. They walked in, awe on their faces as they took in the sight before them.

### **Post Police Run - Back on Supplies**

As soon as the survivors filed in, Helmet walked to the Rental Office, where he had left his stuff before. He looked around, seeing that it was nowhere to be seen, until someone called out to him.

“Helmet? We moved your stuff over here,” Kayama called out, “since we didn’t want anyone to trip over it.”

He must have been capable of listening after all, since he nodded and followed her to the destination. He grabbed the bag and slung it over his shoulder, leaving his current bag in its place.

And just like that, he turned around to leave again.

“Eh?”

Kayama, curious, followed after him, and when he walked towards the main street, stood in front of him.

“Uh? I thought you were done for the day?” she asked, sounding uncertain. “Sounds like you did a lot today too, you sure you don’t want to kick back and show the new guys around?”

In moments like this, however, she truly believed that Helmet didn’t or couldn’t hear them after all, because he walked right past her. She hesitated. Knowing that Helmet didn’t like being touched, but knowing that no one should be leaving alone, she wondered if she should yet.

A blur of red answered her question.

“Heya, Helmet,” Hawks said, his eyes bright and his smile tight, “Where are you goin’? Can I tag along?”

Helmet kept walking, and Kayama was grateful that Hawks would at least be going with him. A blur of green ran past her, slithering with an impressive speed. Without a second glance, Spinner had rushed right past her and caught up to Helmet’s steady walking pace.

...Certainly, the only reason why they had peace on this base must be because they all agreed on one thing.

-

They returned with supplies, the stench of burnt flesh pugnant on them.

### **Guns**

“Oh wow, it’s been a while since I’ve held one,” Setsuno said, looking down at the revolver.

They had unceremoniously taken over the Rental Office, which now doubles as their meeting room, and dumped all the weapons that they pulled from the police run onto the the table. Inui, among some of the others, looked uncomfortably at the sheer amount of firepower they presented on the table, while the others took to fish in the water.

“Right?” Twice chorused back. Checking the weight of one of the sniping rifles, “These things were so useful until the world became quiet.”

Helmet, walking by, was only noticeable because Tsukauchi’s and Chisaki’s voices pulled their attention to them.

“Oh, hey! Chisaki-san, Helmet-san!” Setsuno called out, with a big smile, “We got real guns now, so do you guys want any? Figured that the Helmet should get dibs.”

Chisaki arched an eyebrow, “It’s a lump of metal unless we have bullets. We need metal if I want to make bullets. And more importantly, it’ll make everyone uncomfortable if we walk around with guns. Keep them for whoever runs patrol.”

“And the bullets we have are limited,” Tsukauchi added. “I doubt we’ll make it to the JSDF to take whatever’s left.”

There was a brief pause before Helmet walked into the room. Everyone immediately pulled to full attention, regardless of whether or not Helmey recognized it. He walked to the back and picked up a hammer that was laying in their open toolkit.

“...Helmet?”

He pointed at Chisaki and then at Tsukauchi, and then made the ‘follow me’ gesture, beckoning them.

Curiosity piqued, Setsuno and some of the others followed him out to several rooms down. It was one of the locked rooms that no one had the key for. He grabbed the doorknob and shook it a little, as though confirming for everyone that it was locked.

“I can unlock-”

Helmet brought the hammer down to the doorknob, silencing Chisaki in a second. The others, too shocked that he just broke off a doorknob instead of getting a key (doesn’t he own this place anyways?). Within three hits, the door knob was rolling away on the ground, and Helmet pushed the door open and walked in. He stood off to the side of the room as they poured in.

“...You had an armory here?” Chisaki asked, looking mildly impressed at the sight.

“Oh my god,” Bunbaigawara gasped back, “Yo, Dabi’s going to be pissed. // Man, I’m pissed! We had this much shit this whole time?!”

And Helmet walked out afterwards, like he had finished his duty and had to leave to do something else. It wasn’t like they could stop and really press him for answers anyway, so they let him be.

While it stung to know that he didn’t trust them enough to show them before, it meant a lot that he did now.

-

“Guns are loud though,” Tsukauchi said, “Even if we use it, it would have to be an absolute late resort. More importantly, there are more people here who have never used a gun. The recoil isn’t a joke.”

As strange as it was, Chisaki didn’t disagree with him. He gave a curt nod, showing his agreement, and Kurono swallowed his surprise. He knew there was no point in being so surprised, but he wonders if he would ever get used to seeing a former yakuza and former policeman sitting down side-by-side like this.

“Well,” Chisaki said, lining up the pile of bullets on the table. “Should we need to have a ‘last resort,’ we will go out with a bang.”

The words were morbid, the curvature of his lips was definitely a smile, and Kurono was again thankful that someone saved them. Chisaki, frank and honest, if a little biting, looked alive. His words could be seen as cold, but Kurono was glad that he wanted to fight. He could hardly believe the fact that Chisaki wanted to fight to live now.

Tsukauchi gave a side glance towards him, but looked down at the table.

“A bang, huh?”

### **Guns(2) - training**

"...I... It pains me to say this, but I understand why it's important to arm ourselves," Naomasa said, his heart aching. "However, to arm people without any form of training is..." he hesitated, "I just don't think it'll end pretty."

Did Helmet hear him? He understood, right? What Naomasa was concerned about? They couldn't just hand out firearms out like candy. At this rate, they were going to kill each other, accidental or not, more often than the monsters outside. Naomasa would know. He's seen it for himself. Adults that he once trusted turned incredibly weak once they had a firearm. He couldn't do that to them.

He couldn't.

Helmet, if he understood or not, stood up. Concerning the... everything that always occured around him, he supposed that this was something he really didn't care about. He would know. He's followed him out into battle.

Helmet fought in solitide.

Having a gunman or four more wouldn't make a difference to him. And that thought made Naomasa ache. Here everyone was, doing their best to be of use, and there was Helmet, doing as he always did.

But the fact that he made his armory open to them meant something. It had to mean something.

"Please, I will do my best to train everyone here of the same gun-safety training that I had to do when I first joined the force. I think that it's a good place to begin."

And Helmet didn't seem to even hear him.

-

Instead, Makoto was the one that helped rally support.

"Nii-chan is going to be holding a gun-safety training. I highly recoomend you all attend. Wouldn't want to accidentally shoot our own allies, right?"

And to everyone's shock, Helmet attended those trainings too. Naomasa could fucking cry when he realized that he was there.

### **Helmet is a girl?**

“...Eh?” Mountain Lady blinked in surprise, “What are you talking about? Helmet is a girl, isn’t she?”

There was a long pause that stretched at the table and Kamui Woods spluttered back, “W-What?” Next to him, Vlad King’s eyebrows shot to his hairline.

“Of course she is,” Midnight said, turning to him in shock, “Did you seriously think that Helmet was a man?”

“Uh, yes,” Kamui Woods replied back, and then squinted a little, “Why… did you think that Helmet is a girl?”

“Helmet is a girl?” Present Mic asked, walking by. His voice, his regular talking voice, however, was loud enough that the entire room seemed to fall quieter as everyone seemed to zone in on the conversation.

“I mean,” Takeyama flustered, “I just assumed she was,” she hissed out, trying to keep it quieter.

“Wait, what’s this about Helmet being a girl?” Toga asked, stepping closer.

“You guys have been with Helmet the longest, shouldn’t you be telling us?” Present Mic asked.

The blond shook her head, “We let Helmet have her space,” she said, ignorant to how her words might sound to them. She looked to be pondering something before she shrugged, “Well, whether or not Helmet is a girl or a boy, it doesn't really matter to me, But if she’s a girl, she’ll be softer right? That means she’ll just be that easier to bleed,” she sighed, dreamily, and the others leaned away from her.

“Well, I will say that it doesn't matter either,” Nishiya said, wisely deciding to ignore the later part of Toga’s explanation, “But… why are you convinced that Helmet’s a girl, Takeyama?”

The blond stared at her senpai, dumbfounded, “Oh come on, you’re kidding me, right? Think about it. Someone has been alone all this time, closed off from everyone, never speaks, and is always hiding their face? If she’s been out here by herself for a while, she probably knows what happens to small girls in a world like this.”

The thought sent shivers down their spines, making them incredibly uncomfortable as they carefully gauged her words.

“And on top of that, it’s not like Helmet ever makes demands, you know? But… there’s some people who would force this and that out of girls,” Midnight continued, nodding along, “Instead, we’re all treated fine here, regardless of anything, class, gender, quirk-status, or otherwise.”

“I mean, I don’t care either way either,” Takeyama added. “But I just… If it’s true, I wish she’d come out and tell us. I want her to trust us that we won’t do those kinds of things to her and we got each others’ backs.”

Unknown to them, however, the rumor spread like wildfire. Different people believed different things, of course, and just by knowing that Takeyama was the one who said this made many turn their nose. Yet, the lingering doubt remained and the unshakable question remained strong.

Who is Helmet?

### **Reckless**

If Deku was going to die anyways, then he needed to clean up as much as possible while he still could. He needed to ease the burden of the remaining people in the world by killing as many of these monsters as he could. It was the least he could do.

His head throbbed. He wasn’t sure if it was the heat or the fuzzy things that kept growing from his wounds. Was it a fever or was it the summer heat? Was it because he was tired or was it because he was weak? He didn’t know, but he did know one thing.

He wouldn’t last like this.

Just yesterday, he slipped going up the stairs in a building, and he didn’t even realize that he fell until on his ass, at the bottom of the flight. He completely blacked out during the fall. And then, when he tried to get up, his body quaked and for a moment, he thought that he wouldn’t be able to get up. Luckily, that wasn’t the case but he was almost certain that it wasn’t too long now.

Soon, he thought to himself. Hopefully, there was nothing after death, because all Deku wanted was to be nothing.

But first, he was alive. And he needed to do this. For the people that will still be alive, and all the people who wanted to live, he was going to keep going.

-

For the most part, Deku rarely made mistakes. He rarely messed up. At this point in time, making mistakes meant dying, especially if they were as alone as Deku had been. Mistakes dead to death or fatal injury (that will in turn lead to death).

However, the most important part was that Deku tried his best not to make errors and mistakes where anyone could see him. The last thing he wanted was for anyone to waste their time and energy trying to help him. It would drain them, and it would break his heart trying to explain that to them without saying anything else.

But then, while fighting off the fever from hell, he swung too hard and too high and didn’t kill anything. His bat clattered loudly out of his hand and he was flung to the side of the building. The hit rattled him, making him feel like his organs were being shaken violently as his bones creaked under the hit. He fell to the ground, unable to breath through the mask and helmet, feeling as though his heart had just erupted inside of his chest.

“Helmet!”

Something bubbled out of his mouth, staining his mouth and he grimaced as the stench of vomit coated his lips and was smeared across his face due to the mask.

“Oi, Helmet, are you okay?”

Shit, this was the last thing he wanted. But he couldn’t muster any feeling in his arms. They trembled, the weak twigs that they were, and he swore in his head.

If they knew that he, some young teenager was the Helmet that died, it would devastate them. He couldn’t do that. He needed to die far away where they would never know.

He needed to die a no one.

His legs felt weak, and then, he felt a hand on his arm.

“Helmet…?”

No, he thought to himself. Not Hawks. Why did it have to be Hawks? He couldn’t do this to Hawks.

He was a scumbag. The worst of the worst. He didn’t deserve that tender gesture and soft tone. He didn’t. He didn’t deserve to be mourned and missed and remembered.

Renewed with the strength to die distantly, he slapped the hand away and got up. Grabbing his bat, he rushed back to the street where Dabi’s ever reliable fire consumed those that wandered.

He watched as corpses became ash.

If he was a decent person, he would have thanked them. He would thank them for reminding him that he couldn’t die here, where the body would be seen and remembered. He would thank them for giving him the strength to force himself back up to his feet so that he could die a death befitting of the piece of shit that he was.

But he wasn’t a decent person. He wasn’t even close.

He stared at them, jealous that they were nothing more than ash.

“...Are you… okay?”

He turned on his heel, refocused on the next building they came to clear out. The stench of vomit permeated his nose, tainting him and making his stomach churn in a nauseating way. The world spun around him and the ground felt uneven, but he marched onwards. The cloth clung to his face, a constant reminder of his weakness.

He was only glad that he didn’t really eat anything. At the very least, there weren’t half-decomposed chunks of food smeared across the front of his face.

Deku marched on.

A hand came out in front of him, but he walked around with. When someone came to grab him, he yanked his hand away from their grasp and stalked on.

“Wait, are you upset that Dabi took your kill? I promise he didn’t mean it. // Damn bastard stole my kill,” Twice said, his voice bordering on whiny.

“Hey, Helmet, maybe you should… take a break? That was a pretty nasty hit…” Hawks tried.

Deku, who knew that their kindness would break him, moved on.

### **Uraraka Finds Out**

When she finally got to see his eyes for the first time, the only thing that ran in her mind was that he had vibrant green eyes, and it was a shame that no one else knew.

The second thing she thought was that he looked young.

While everyone always mentioned how small Helmet was, no one ever thought that he was young. Aloof and alone, but not young. It… The thought just never occurred to them. She didn’t know about the er… scarier residents of this area, but for her and the people close in age to her, she saw how the Pro Heroes listened to him and always deferred back to him about any major decisions. And so, naturally, they just saw Helmet as their silent, small, and sturdy leader.

Never once did she ever consider the notion that he could be her age. Or younger. He looked that young.

He yawned, clearly just woken up and rubbed his face. And then, he froze as his eyes snapped up to her and then his hands flew to cover his face.

Looking at him like that, taken-off guard and surprised, he looked even younger. She… doesn’t know how to feel about that. But, seeing him this uncomfortable that someone saw his face made her feel a bit sad.

Like, she knew there was no reason for him to explicitly trust her, since she never helped out with the supply runs or the defense or anything, but it was still a little painful to think that someone that cared so much for her and everyone here didn’t trust them at all. She found the helmet on the ground and passed it over to him. He flinched when she came close, and she didn’t understand how someone who could dive into a swarm of Walkers could be so scared of a girl who couldn’t even fight off one with a weapon.

“Here,” she said quietly, “I…” she considered her words carefully, “I didn’t see anything.”

His arms slowly came down from his face, so that those green eyes could catch her gaze and he stared at her in obvious wonder. She could see her reflection in his eyes, clear as day, and understood in an instant why he never unmasked himself.

He was so easy to read.

“But if possible,” she said quietly, “one day, I would like to properly eat with you.” She gave a toothy grin at the man. “I won’t let anyone know you’re here. So, go ahead and rest up.”

She left. She approached Aizawa and lied to him, telling him that she didn’t see him in any of the supply closets. The man, as stressed as always, sighed back and nodded at her that he was grateful that she checked. She felt a little twinge of guilt, and then excused herself from the nightly social activities to head to her room.

She laid down on her new bed, it smelled like her and bleach. The blankets were in good condition, soft and plush, and she felt herself relax against a comfort she didn’t think she’d ever get back. The memories of what had just occurred finally hit her full-force, she buried her face into the pillow.

Eating together? What a fucking joke.

Helmet would never do that. He couldn’t.

Helmet was a smart guy. She knew this. She’s certain of this. So she’s also certain that he already figured out that if it comes out that he’s young, the others will collapse in on themselves when they realize that they have been led around by such a young person. It was made even more obvious when she compared how the adults treat them versus other adults. While she had some hope for the heroes, she’s also seen, on several occasions, how fragile they actually are.

If heroes save the people, then who saved the heroes?

A small boy who couldn’t even share his name.

She’ll take this secret to the grave. She takes a deep shaky breath, because it’s just too sad. How could the person who has given them all <company> and the ability to be safe and secure together is the person that is the person who could only rest between gallons of bleach, tucked away from the world?

-

“...Ochako, are you okay?”

She looked to where Tsuyu stared at her worriedly.

She… She honestly felt like shit.

Because now that she thought about it, if Helmet lived here and that’s why he holed up in these apartments, that meant he probably never gave his name out because he knew that someone would have looked it up.

When she thought about it like that, she felt even sadder. Didn’t that mean that there was no one here who knew his name? No one would ever call his name, and no one would ever remember him by his name. He would die, nameless except for the fact that he wore a helmet. He was called Helmet because he wore one.

All these people he helped, that he saved, that he gave meaning to, and not one of them could pay him back or even remember him properly.

As someone who grew up watching the Golden Age of Heroes, it was hard to stomach.

“Just a bad dream,” she said with a tight smile.

The frog girl stared for another moment and then placed a large hand onto her back, “It’s okay,” she said, “Today will be a good day, so I’m glad that you woke up.”

The people here were infinitely kind. It just made her sad to think that Helmet probably doesn’t know about the kindness he managed to salvage at the end of the world.

“Me too,” she agreed wholeheartedly.

There had to be something that she could do. Because, once upon a time, she wanted to be a hero so that her folks could take it easy.

## Autumn - sickness

### **Sickness**

“Haha, what are you talking about? I’m fine. I just didn’t sleep well…”

Saying something like “I’m fine” before face-planting into the ground is a contradictory statement.

-

A cold breaks out at their base. Normally, this wouldn’t be an issue, because they have a few doctors, good medicine, and sensibility. And if the situation was severe enough, Chisaki could Overhaul just about any illness and most injuries away without any problem. However, this time, Chisaki is one of the first ones that’s knocked out.

It’s a fever that’s bad enough that it leaves him bedridden for days. He’s barely coherent, and he can’t even stand up on his own on the rare occasion that he can open his eyes. As though that wasn’t bad enough, the others start dropping like flies as well.

Within the first three days, half the base has been knocked out with an illness that leaves them shivering and weak.

Helmet, like always, moved with an efficiency that spells out to the rest of them that no one will be left behind. No one will be abandoned. Everyone who wanted to live will be given a chance. He didn’t ask anyone to help him, but even if he wanted to, by the fourth day, there was seldom anyone who wasn’t sick.

-

It wasn’t like just because everyone was sick that suddenly, the world would stop and let them ride it out. No, things that needed to be done still needed to be done.

Just a few months ago, going out alone like this was a normal thing. But now, Deku couldn’t help but miss the presence of another. Still, he supposes that it was only a matter of time anyways. It wasn’t good to get used to having people.

Armed with his bat, he resolutely swears that he will protect what remains.

Something growled to his left, and he moved efficiently to kill it.

-

Helmet returns, caked in blood and the stench makes his stomach roll. Just as quickly as he felt it, he felt the shame flood his features instead.

Here was Helmet, doing his absolute best to take care of everyone and going out on his own to run patrols and get supplies, and here was Tamaki, a little nauseous at the sight of blood.

“I… I want to help,” he said, and then rushed to the smaller man. He still couldn’t believe that Helmet was actually smaller than him, but he wouldn’t let this stop him now.

He took another deep breath while Helmet meticulously kept cleaning off his clothes and padding into a small kiddy pool filled with bleach.

“Please, Helmet, how can I help?”

The man’s hands stilled for a brief second before he stood up. His head turned to face Tamaki, and Tamaki was ready to do just about anything.

But there was no response, and he walked right by him instead.

That feeling of worthlessness made its home in his heart, but when he thought about the painful smile Nejire gave him and the harsh pants from a feverish Mirio, turned back around.

He’ll help Helmet, even if it was the last thing he did.

-

By some miracle, Nejire was the next person to wake up. Tamaki felt exhausted, and had no idea how Helmet was still moving at the same speed and energy he’s had since this whole thing probably started.

He made rice gruel for everyone to consume, he had the medicine out and delivered it to each and every single individual without fail, every day, three times a day. If he wasn’t doing that, he was out cleaning the dirty laundry covered in sweat, vomit, and some days, even feces. There was a constant rotation of sheets and clothes that were hung outside in their front lawn, a kiddy pool filled with bleach and other disinfectant items, and then a place for the clothes to be washed with something resembling detergent. And then, sometime during the nights, he would rush outside and return covered in blood.

Tamaki tried his best. He got nervous cooking and ended up burning some of the gruel, and he tripped into the bleach pool twice and ended up just sitting and crying the chemicals out of his eyes. Being with the other sick people made his stomach twist painfully, partly from the stench and partly from guilt, and he didn’t know how anyone could just go in and out of their rooms, changing sheets, wiping down bodies, feeding people, while death reeked in the air.

But Nejire woke up. And bless Nejire’s heart though, since she gave a big grin and said, “Leave the ladies to me!”

Tamaki felt his heart recenter. This wasn’t for naught. The walking proof that their actions bore fruit was Nejire and her healthy smile.

Taking a deep breath, Tamaki focused. It’s okay if he failed this time, he’ll just get better. He’ll keep going. He’ll keep pushing. This wasn’t the end, not even close.

Once upon a time, he wanted to be a hero. He thought that this was the closest he has gotten to that dream since the world ended.

-

The sun could stop shining but no one would even notice because Mirio. Just. Mirio.

“Are…. are you sure?”

“My side hurts from sleeping for so long,” Mirio said, stretching his sides before he gave a thumbs-up and a wide grin, “But otherwise, I feel fine!” He sniffled, still working through the last bits of the cold, but doing much better than he was just two days ago.

Tamaki wasn’t crying, but it was really hard not to.

“Thanks for taking care of me, Tamaki! Let’s save everyone else together now!”

He couldn’t quite get the words out, but he managed to grin right back. It might not be as bright as Mirio, but the hope rekindled in his heart.

-

Then came the patients who were able to stand but were still sick.

“I’m fine, get off me,” Aizawa all but hissed.

Nervously, Tamaki bit on his bottom lip, but he had to.

Suddenly, Aizawa slumped forward. He was caught when an arm wrapped around his middle and gently guided him to the floor. Behind him, Helmet placed his bat through his backpack straps as a makeshift holster. He leaned down and picked the former underground hero up with minimal effort and walked back up the stairs to deposit him in the room where a few of the other male patients were.

“Well,” Mirio whistled, “That’s one way to do it.”

“That just gives us more work though,” Tamaki said, wincing on the inside. Given how groggy Aizawa was, he didn’t think that it would have taken much of a hit, but it still looked painful.

“Back to work!” Eri cheered, “So he doesn’t have to be whacked anymore!”

Mirio beamed back, “Yeah, you’re right about that, Eri-chan!”

### **Enter Gang Orca: Sakamata Kugo**

Sakamata is ready to die when the world gives him one more chance.

### **Sakamata - and the sick**

The man in the helmet (actually, he isn’t sure if he is a man, or if he’s even a he, but he’s uncomfortable to think that someone who tore through all those bodies was a child) led him to a small house. He motioned at it, and passed him a small key.

“Ah, you want me to stay here?” he asked.

His helmet bobbed, nodding to affirm.

“...And you?” Sakamata asked.

He pointed down the way.

“May I… see?”

The visor turned to face him, and he wondered what this person looked like under the helmet, but he turned around to keep walking. After a moment, Sakamata followed. After watching all those bodies be torn apart and being just alone and alone and alone, he didn’t want to relinquish the one sense of company he had. So even if he may come off as clingy, he stuck close to Helmet.

He was tired of being alone.

-

However, the last thing that Sakamata expected was a base of some sort. He could feel his heart stir at the thought that there were many people in the same location, living and working together in harmony.

His joy was short-lived when a young man, and he knew this blond, came up to greet them.

“Helmet, welcome back!” Mirio, who had really started making a name for himself in his second year at UA, stood in front of them. “Oh, a survivo… Gang Orca-san!?”

Meeting survivors were great. Seeing a familiar face, however, was a joy that could not be described in words. He took a shaky step forward, and Mirio took a step back.

“Whoa, sorry about that, but these are really dirty sheets. Man, I’m glad to see you, but this is some terrible timing. Everyone is sick, but I’m sure that there is a place where the sickness hasn’t spread to, if you want to wait there?”

“They’re sick…?”

He turned sharply to the person who saved him.

“That’s why that house…”

He thought about the people he had to abandon, and then to the people who had abandoned him.

“Let me help,” he decided in an instant.

Mirio stared at him for a moment.

“...Helmet, is that okay?”

In response, Helmet walked away, leaving the conversation without another glance.

“...Well, I guess if you’re here that’s good enough. Welcome on board, Gang Orca-san!”

### **Post-sickness**

Deku is the last to get sick. When he realized what was happening, why he can’t tell left from right, and why his body felt like lead, he walked to the main commons where Tamaki was still washing the sheets, Nejire is keeping the fire to have hot water bottles up and going, and Mirio is faithfully delivering the water bottles with an optimism that could replace the sun.

Around the base, life had returned. Sharp orders to keep everything sanitized and clean, making sure that everyone got the medicine they needed, and otherwise returning to their normal resounded all around the area. Deku’s limited knowledge of plants was addressed and he wasn’t running alone anymore when he left the base.

In that moment, he understood that everyone will be okay. He grabbed some supplies, thought about it, and then put them back. If he didn’t come back, they would be wasted on him. He waited for the moment Gang Orca talked to Nejire about something, and ran for one of the safe-houses closer to the edge of the border when they turned their backs.

These people are foolishly kind. He doesn’t want to take anything else from them.

Right when he thought that he wouldn't make it, he got there without a problem. He pulled himself into the bed of someone he’s waiting for and passed out after locking up. He felt miserable, awful, but he hoped that morning light would come.

For the first time in a long time, he thought that it would be nice to stay alive.

There is a switchblade in his hand. He doesn’t remember a time when he doesn’t have it. Just in case. He can’t really grip it because of how hard he’s sweating, but it’s there in case something goes wrong.

Locking himself into the room of a childhood hero, Deku hoped that the person he was waiting for would forgive him for this. He dragged out the futon that he used to use when he came over for sleepovers, all those years ago, and laid down. Between one slow breath and another, he drifted between memories and dreams and wondered who they belonged to.

-

It’ll be three days until he deemed himself healthy enough to return. He spent the grand majority of it chomping through the leftover granola bars he left here, grateful that they were untouched, and sleeping off the fever. He knew that eating something warm would be helpful, but when the whole world kept spinning around him, decided that starting a fire in the kitchen would be fucking awful. As it was, he finally returned when there was no more runny nose. His stomach was painfully empty, his fever was gone, and he felt like he’s dying.

Excellent, he thought, because pain means he was alive.

Well, he supposed that this is his new normal at this point. He tipped his head back, took a deep breath, and made a decision.

He returned after breaking into a house down the street. He took another half-day to get around the perimeter to double-check that he was just fine. His reflexes hadn't dulled, and he felt like all the rust in his body from being out of commision was gone now.

Now that he’s completely alone, he’s glad that he can eat as much as he wanted in privacy and away from prying eyes. He can keep his helmet off, but doesn’t take off much else since he never knew when he would need it.

He found a group of walkers, and knocked them out easily. Even hungry and exhausted, this was easy and their bodies felt light. Good. Once he pocketed their IDs and piled them up, he leaned back and realized that he was still alone.

Regardless of how full he could be, the familiar sensation of turning around and seeing someone who had his back was more comforting. He could hear their voices already, exasperated and annoyed but alive, and he wondered when they made a home in his heart. Feeling a little stronger and better, he finished out the old-fashioned way. He gathered the bodies to one area and lit it. It’s familiar, but it’s been a long time since he had to do it.

The smoke brought Hawks to him.

“...Of course you were hard at work,” he said, landing right next to him. He whistled at the pile of corpses that were burning away, and then turned to the young man. “Ready to go home? Everyone’s pretty much better now.”

He stared for a moment longer, and Deku kept his eyes on the fire for a bit longer before he turned to the blond.

“...I…” for a minute, the former hero looked like he was going to say something, and then he said, “We’re waiting.”

He nodded back, and the two watched until the fire died out completely before they went back.

-

“Alright, let’s commence this meeting,” Sasaki said, pushing his glasses up, “This… incident cannot repeat itself.”

Chisaki sighed back. “From the sounds of it, this was a combination of multiple things. The first being that we suddenly got a bunch of new arrivals from a variety of different locations. The second is the changing seasons, and we still can’t get the heat or air-conditioning units up and running in every room. The third is that the tension of the last few years has finally broken. The resulting relief fever was probably the main reason why the fever didn’t break so easily..”

He leaned forward to rest his elbows onto the table. To think that the joys of finishing construction, having a place to be free, safe and sound, would have such detrimental effects.

“And of course, the reason that this got so out-of-hand in the first place was that I was the first one out. As far as healing-related quirks, I’m the closest one that fits the bill. Otherwise, we got a regular doctor, two nurses, and limited medicine and no ways to do medical tests yet.”

Kurono thinks that the old Chisaki, the one that broke out in hives when blood splattered on him and could get physically ill from using his own quirk, has come a long way. He doesn't say anything though, but he does wish that Oyaji could see him now.

Across the table, Sasaki nodded back, “It’s good to know the cause. However, we cannot allow this to happen again. We got lucky that we didn’t all get sick at once, and that the ones who didn’t get sick were capable of helping others.”

Mirio’s smile was a little tight, even under the unsaid compliment, “But Sir, more than us, Helmet was the one that did most of the work.”

The man nodded back, “I have no doubts. Still, for standing in like that, even though you could have gotten sick, was a great contributing factor. In those moments of panic, you kept calm and worked on helping out. That’s a good thing, Mirio.”

“Getting back on track,” Endeavor spoke up, “Our supplies took a hit from this. We were well-prepared for this emergency, but we might not be as lucky next time. What if, next time, we are under attack or it’s something more permanent than a cold? Or worse, the weather locks us in for the foreseeable future?”

The thought was numbing. After the constant ring of success all around, they had gotten high on the thought that they were invincible and that they couldn’t lose, but the reality of the situation was much more bitter.

Indeed, they had gotten lucky this time.

“But what really bothers me about all of this,” Tsukauchi started very slowly, “is that right when we all started to get better, Helmet left. He was gone for three days, right?” he asked. “His supplies don’t reflect that…”

“What are you trying to say?” Twice said, unhappy with how all these <good guys> always had to talk in circles. Why couldn’t they be more to the point? “// He probably just wanted a break from all the sick fucks living in his house.”

Tsukauchi grimaced at the words but it was Chisaki that spoke up.

“You think he caught the cold and ran off?” he asked, “Hid himself away for three days to take care of himself before he came back?”

Twice crossed his arms in front of his chest, that uncomfortable feeling beginning to bubble back up into his chest, as it always did when he was confronted with this fact. The same feeling he had when he saw

“Someone that won’t abandon anyone in need but doesn’t trust them enough to even show his face,” Aizawa sighed, rubbing his face with his hands and seeming to age three more years, “What a problematic guy.”

The hardest part of it, however, was how easy it would be to see. Helmet was the living personification of the word <independent>.

### **Celebration**

For Deku, the cold reminded him of his own weakness and frailty. Not just in physical strength and durability, but in how weak his spirit has become. He never thought that he had already become so dependent on the presence of the people around him.

He doesn’t think he’ll ever be able to prepare for their departure. When they leave, he knows that he’ll have a hard time saying goodbye.

“Ah, I just think it’s a bit of a shame to live just to see tomorrow, you know?”

It might have been a little thing that Kayama mentioned, but the truth behind the statement really resonated with him. It was something she mentioned a long time ago, but he thinks that right now, more than ever, he wants to deliver on the statement.

And so, he walked around until he found Chisaki, his usual go-to for things like this, and waved at the man to catch his attention. He felt a little bad, since it looked that the man was reading through something, but the man smiled at the sight of him.

Or at least, with the way his mask crinkled, Deku was hoping that it was a smile.

“Helmet,” he greeted, “What do I owe this pleasure?”

Deku gave a smile, even if the man couldn’t see it, and handed him a picture book.

“...For Eri?” he asked.

He shook his head and then tapped onto the cover.

“...Ah,” Chiaski said, eyeing the cover, “Would you like me to read it to you?”

Deku froze for a second, what?

“...A joke,” he muttered back, but then opened the book up, “...Hm, then, could it be that-”

Deku tapped the book again, getting impatient, and the older man turned his head from the book to the man. He pushed the book closed and traced out some lines on the cover.

“...Oh, are you trying to spell out matsu…” he paused, and as the words came out, his eyebrows arched up, “You want to do a Matsuri? Here?”

The green-haired boy grinned brightly, more than pleased that he finally understood and gave a curt nod. Chisaki stared back at him and barked out a laugh.

“Alright,” he said, “It’ll do well for morale, too. Let’s call everyone in again.”

-

And so, the next meeting that was called was about a Matsuri event.

“And at the end of the festival, we can do votes on who had the best event,” Makoto said, her eyes shining. “A healthy competition is good, right?”

Deku nodded back, excited with how everyone else was getting excited no matter how much they tried not to show it.

(late) autumn matsuri

### **Sake**

That Matsuri was a big hit. It would mark the first time for many of them to be outside of the complex, but it wouldn’t be a matsuri if they didn’t take to the streets, would it? It wasn’t quite like how he remembered, barely a shadow of what it used to be, but it was a good start. They were barely a candle in comparison to where the streets would flood with lights and people.

But the laughter was unmistakable.

They managed to get about four stalls open, various stall foods pre-prepared, some games that were out and about. More importantly, it went without a hitch. No lingering walker, no one got into a huge fight, and Deku would even go a step further and say that everyone enjoyed it.

No matter where they were from, something that reminded them of home and peace was well-respected here. He was thankful for it.

But now the lights were out. They were going to take down starting tomorrow, so people can go to sleep with a pleasant buzz tonight, and he left the sake out for the adults to drink. From the happy cheers he heard down the hallway, he’s glad to know that he was correct.

“...So, while everyone else gets wasted, were going to handle patrol until they’re all better?”

Helmet paused from where he had been getting ready to take a lap around the school.

Standing a few feet back, Enji was staring down at him, as imposing as ever.

“...Is this fun for you?” he asked quietly, “Allowing others to take advantage of your hard work like this? To work hard so that others may reap the rewards? Is this how you wish to live?”

As always, he didn’t get a response. It couldn’t be because he was too quiet, since Enji was not a quiet man. There was no need to yell, but he was getting frustrated enough to consider it. Far away, in the back of his mind, he knew that yelling wouldn’t make a difference, but he didn’t know what else to try. Of course, he wouldn’t do that, since he knew his presence and voice would ruin the happy atmosphere that rested on their base.

He just wanted an answer. He thinks back to a time where people used to trip over themselves in an attempt to try and talk to him and wonder where the time has gone.

He took a step forward, fire appearing right on his face, and Helmet pulled his hand up, as though to indicate that they should keep it down. He turned over, and Enji followed his direction and saw where there were a bunch of dogs meandering in and out of the little shelter they had built them a few months back.

The fire was extinguished off of his face, and he took a deep long sigh.

“Alright Fine. Let’s do this your way.”

One day, Helmet will choose to talk to him, will take off his helmet, and one day, they’ll be safe and secure enough that they don’t even need to have guard rotation. One day, Helmet will trust him, and ask him to come join him on patrols instead of taking it all on himself. And when that day, in the distant future, comes (and Enji is certain that it will come, this guy can work *miracles*), he will pour Helmet a drink.

-

That night, Helmet took his helmet off and wiped it down. It was much easier, and a little relieving to think that he had to wipe down his helmet for any reason not related to blood. He hummed quietly, the little tone that Yamada was drunkenly singing stuck in his head like an earworm.

His eye caught his reflection. He took in the scarred features and green eyes and matted curls. The person staring back at him, the person in his reflection…

...What was his name?

While fighting for the unknown future, it seemed that he had forgotten something important as a result.

Deku, he realized. That’s right, that was his name. If he closed his eyes, the thoughts that weren’t about killing and narrowly avoiding death was a distant memory of someone who had flowers bloom in their hand. That person, even if he couldn’t really remember what they looked like or what they sounded like, was the person that called him that.

<Deku.>

### **Enter: All Might**

There is a peaceful-looking man sleeping at the center of the ground floor of the warehouse. He has wild blond locks, and looks more like a skeleton than a human. He looks like he’s been specifically placed there, under the single patch of sunlight from the broken ceiling above.

Everything about it smells like a trap.

But all Deku sees is the Hero who once told him that a Quirkless boy couldn’t become a hero. That day was also the day that the virus broke out, and Deku often thought back to that day with a resounding ‘Yes, All Might, you are right. A quirkless guy like him could never be a Hero.’ He was such a naive fool then.

And standing, staring at that man, at the shell of what used to be the Symbol of Peace, he thinks it’s too sad if he were to turn his back and pretend he didn’t see this.

Even if it was a trap, even if this will end blowing back up in his face, he doesn’t think it’s right to let the person who always tried to save people with a smile on his face die without anyone knowing or caring.

And then, after hauling the man onto his shoulders, Deku suddenly realized that the walkers that shifted right outside were stepping away. He didn’t know what to think, but his curiosity won out and he took a step closer to them. He marveled as they stepped away.

…It couldn’t be.

Perhaps, the reason why so many things stayed away and this man was left alone at the warehouse, wasn’t because something put him there, but because nothing wanted to come close. It was a terrifying thought and a revolutionary idea-should it not just be a baseless theory.

Deku didn’t have the heart to experiment it, and instead felt the weight of the world against his shoulders.

-

When Deku and Aizawa managed to bring him back to base, a disgruntled Shigaraki trailing behind them at the thought of having another person here, they handed off their new arrival for Chisaki’s attention and care.

Gran Torino and Sasaki manage to corner him.

“Thank you,” they said, voice thick with sincerity and another emotion that Deku never got used to hearing.

-

It was something that, to Deku, was super random. He had, on his way back in, stumbled upon the man. He looked much better than before, looking as though he was starting to fill in and become something more human and less skeletal. No matter what anyone else said, he rarely went out of his way to avoid people, with a few exceptions. One of those exceptions was this man in front of him.

He heard that Chisaki was mending what was lost inside of him, similar to what he did for Compress’s arm, but it was still different to see it right in front of him.

“I’m sure that, had the world never fallen apart,” Yagi said, “...You would have been a great hero.”

He nodded at them and kept walking away, his head spinning. He climbed up to his apartment, closed the door behind him and then sat at the doorstep for a moment.

He collects himself, takes off his helmet, his blood-soaked gloves and his top layer. He drops them to the side, too distracted to meticulously clean off the probably infected blood, and instead makes a beeline for something that he hasn’t even thought of for months.

Tucked away in the furthest corners of his room was his precious hero merchandise that he squirreled away because he was scared of getting blood on it by accident. They were in as pristine condition as he remembered them, and didn’t dare take them out.

Instead, he slept on the ground, curled around the box where his childhood laid, Yagi’s words echoing inside of him.

### **Shooting Range**

“It took a lot longer than I wanted,” Chisaki admitted. “But we got it set up.”

Deku looked to their small shooting range. He had no idea how big a shooting range was supposed to be, so he was super happy when they had found a police officer like Tsukauchi. He could entrust the training and the likes to him.

“Oh, you’re not going to try it out?”

A long time ago, back when a different type of life filled the apartment homes here, the person who ran the armory that he showed the others here, gave him a rundown on the revolver he had on hand. It was Deku’s gun.

He also used that same gun on the person who ran that little armory, and spent the rest of the week throwing up whenever he looked at that revolver.

With more ease than he expected, he took the gun on the table. He stood at the shooting range, and swears he could hear that man’s voice walking through all the steps and all the safety regulations. He thinks about all of them, ignoring some of them, but stands with just him and the target.

He lifted up the gun. Take a deep breath, try not to think about the quiet pleading and fires.

The shot, he always forgets, is much harder than he thinks it will be. The weight of the gun almost flies back in the recoil, and his hand trembled for some time afterwards.

## Winter

### **Snow**

It snowed.

Going outside, after a night of heavy snow, was like a dream come true. But as soon as Aizawa saw it, he narrowed his eyes and looked around.

“Yooooo Shota, did you see! It’s all snow!”

“...Hizashi,” Aizawa said quietly, “...I didn’t even hear anyone shoveling. Did you?”

“Huh?” Yamada finally looked at the ground and then back, “Oh, you’re right!”

Aizawa had this inkling feeling about it but-

“Good morning!”

The two peered down the way, where some of the younger students were gathered around. They waved up at the two, and Aizawa let a sigh of relief when he saw the shovels in their hand.

“You guys are so late to wake up!”

“Man, we’re barely done! Hurry up!”

“C’mon, you old timers!”

Aizawa snorted back, cheeky brats. The cold breeze rushed at him, but this time, it didn’t seem to settle in his bones.

-

“Yeah, when we woke up, the path from the Rental Office and around the apartment and stuff were shoveled up,” Kirishima said, and then sheepishly, he rubbed the back of his head, “So we figured we’d help with the rest of the clean-up.”

“...He did that, huh?” Aizawa sighed back. He rubbed the back of his head.

“Aizawa-san, if you are tired, I highly recommend you move to the inside so that we may finish shoveling up this path!” Tenya, and seriously how is he related to Ingenium, said while moving his hand in chopping motions.

“Who said I’m too tired?” he scowled back, feeling miffed that such a thing would ever be suggested. He was still damn young, alright? “Give me that shovel.”

Next to him, Yamada snickered and Aizawa suppressed the urge to hit him.

### **Dec: Christmas Lights**

The last matsuri idea was a hit, even for the people that were initially resistant to the idea. So, it was only natural that, as he watched the days pile on by and marked the calendar as such, that they do something for Christmas day. He stared at it, wondered what they should do this year, this time, and wanted something truly amazing to end the year.

He often thought about how some of them mentioned how awful and dreary everything could be here. He never really thought about it, but if he has learned anything by this point, it was this one thing. Everyone here was so incredibly talented and tough in a way that he didn’t think he could ever be. It was really inspiring to be by their side, and watch them create necessities in an effort to make a better future.

When December rolled in, Helmet wanted to pull out all the boxes of Christmas lights, from all sorts of lights of all shapes and sizes. As always, everyone was in great spirits. He was glad that they were all well and healthy, all things considered.

He was eternally grateful for it.

It was also why he didn’t mind how tired he felt. There was a lot to do, and not much time to do it. These days, it was hard to move almost all of his fingers in his arm now. Days where he doesn’t have to tape his hand to a bat were almost non-existent. He wanted to just take a few days off to have a break, but if he doesn’t show his face for a day and a half, they came knocking.

They’re worried. He knew they were worried. He hasn’t been worried-over in a very long time. It hurts his heart, so he tries a little harder. He doesn’t know how or why they care about him, but he greedily soaks it up.

A little more certain, he prepared for some long days.

-

Normally, Helmet went out about three times a week, sometimes two. He left early in the morning and returned sometime in the afternoon, or late at night and returned early in the morning. Either way, he came back with a bag of goods (some more than others), and splattered in blood. Most of them, who have been here for a few months, have gotten used to this. Newer arrivals may comment on it, but ultimately accept it. It was clear that Helmet wasn’t going to listen or let anyone know what he wanted to do, so it was better for them to mold around him.

So, this was not normal.

“...Helmet-san? Oh, welcome back!”

Yagi paused, and next to him, Torino did the same once he realized that the man stopped.

“What’s up, Toshinori?” he asked, hopping up onto the railing. “Ara? That’s… Kirishima, right? And Helmet.”

“Yes,” Yagi confirmed. “I thought the morning team already came back from their recon mission right before lunch.”

In fact, Snipe and Hakamata were discussing how cold it was this morning over lunch. They had joked that Helmet’s quirk must be related to temperature, because he didn’t seem to be bothered by the cold, the same way he wasn’t bothered by the heat in the middle of the summer.

Regardless, the fact that Helmet was walking into the compound grounds, in different clothes than he was wearing earlier that day, meant that he had left before. The former heroes watched as Helmet raised his hand, acknowledging Kirishima, and then kept walking in.

Torino frowned. Yagi frowned. The two stared at each other and turned to hunt down anyone who was apart of the morning travelers.

-

“Helmet came back with us,” Hakamata said with certainty. “And you’re telling me that he left and came back in?” He frowned at the thought, looking uncomfortable at the thought.

“

### **Getting the lights**

December 20th begins with Helmet pulling out the wagon. The sight of it, since they hadn’t seen it since the orchid incident that ended with Endeavor joining their ranks, brought dread. The last time Helmet took it out, he was gone for several days.

The days have gotten extremely cold. Even though the majority of the apartment complex had a mostly functioning A/C and heating, generating enough energy for it was a little hard. To find something sustainable for them to use for an unknown amount of time was something that Majima, and several others, worked tirelessly for. While the fire-quirk and other warmth-creation related quirk users were happy to volunteer, no one wanted them to exhaust themselves.

Four of the dogs were making laps around him, one laying by his side and whimpering, as Helmet pulled and rattled at the wagon. Next to him was an open bag of tools, and on the other side of the wagon was Mei.

“I gotta say, Helmet,” she said, “What do you even need this for?” she asked. And when she predictably didn’t get a response, tapped the wagon. “Well, the bike and the wagon are good to go. The wheels won’t last if you go off-road. Treat my baby well, okay?”

She gave him a blinding grin, and Helmet gave a respectful bow in return. He stood up and pulled at the front of the bike, and slowly rolled it up to the entrance of the complex. He stretched his neck, rolled his shoulders and then, something suddenly dropped into the wagon.

He jerked, his hand coming up to his bat, and faced the ever-smiling Hawks. His hand dropped from his bat, but he didn’t relax.

“Morning, Helmet!” he cheered. His happy demeanor didn’t make it to his eyes however, and Helmet leaned back at the near-threatening aura that emitted from the winged-man. “You know, you should just let us know when you’re planning on going on a journey, don’t you think? Whatever it is that you’re doing, isn’t it better to go together? Safety in numbers and all that.”

He was asking questions, but with the way he spoke, it didn’t feel like he was asking at all. As it was, Helmet stared at him for another moment and then got on the bike without further fanfare. The blond blanched.

Even if Hawks has never received a different kind of response from Helmet, being ignored like this wasn’t something he was used to. He didn’t think he ever would get used to it.

“...Well,” Hawks stood up on the wagon, and back-flipped off of it. With his wings, it was an easy feat, and he landed without a problem behind the wagon. “Two can play this game.”

If Helet didn’t want to speak, that was fine. He’ll speak up enough for the two of them.

He cupped his hands around his mouth, and as loud as he could yell, shouted out, “Hey, everyone! Helmet and I are heading out with the wagon! We don’t know when we’ll be back so take care!”

Helmet snapped back to him, was he shocked? Confused? Alarmed? Hawks didn’t know. But he did know that a good portion of the base probably heard him, if the sudden stampede of footsteps were any indication. Helmet promptly got on his bike, ready to pedal off, when Tensei came to them.

“Whoa there!” he cried out, good-naturedly and a little sweaty. He gave them a broad grin, “What’s the rush?” he asked. “Something we are in a dire need of? You know, it’s going to be really cold-”

“And where are you planning on going?”

With a streak of flames going behind him, Enji descended down by their side in an instant.

To their defense, they’ve been tense all month. Everyone had been noticing that Helmet has been going out more. Everyone who went out reported back different things too.

Helmet folded his arms over the handlebars, placed his head on his arms and took a deep breath. The display of frustration made Hawks feel just a little bit bad, but overwhelmingly, he was glad that their benefactor could emote after all. They weren’t just nothing to him.

This meant that he trusted them a little, right? Even if it was just a little? Since he was showing that he was frustrated?

“Helmet’s just going down the street!” Mei called out to them. “He’s just transporting some stuff over.”

“Then,” Enji decided, his voice stern as his heavy gaze fell on Helmet, “it’ll be fine if we all go, right?”

At that, the mood shifted just a bit, and another person ran up.

“Helmet! If you’re transporting stuff, then might I remind you that my quirk is good for easy transportation!” Atsushiro called out, jogging up to them. He gave a large flourish before he bowed at the waist, every bit a performer. “I will be honored to join you.”

“Welcome, then,” Hawks said, waving at him lazily. “Well, Helmet seems to be in a rush, so let’s get this show on the road, alright?”

Without further fanfare, the group of them left. One of the dogs trotted along Helmet, tail wagging in its eagerness to come along.

-

The silence during the walk felt oppressive. Luckily, they really didn’t go too far before Helmet stopped pedaling. It was just a few blocks away, at the closest convenience store in the area. It has long since been plundered, and very little of anything was left.

Helmet reached over to grab the small bag of tools, slinging it over his shoulder before he made his way through the glass and debris and into the store. All the rooms have already been broken into, doors broken off their hinges or swung open.

“I’ll keep an eye on the perimeter,” Enji called out to them.

“Then, I guess the rest of us will join him,” Tensei replied back, while Atsuhiro was half a step behind Helmet in entering the store. “...What are we looking for?”

They weren’t sure what they were expecting. Was Helmet checking on the conditions of the other houses? Did they miss something?

When they returned, they were all carrying one box each. They piled it into the wagon, and at Enji’s curious gaze, Hawks gave him the tiredest grin he’s ever seen on the man.

“They’re Christmas lights,” he explained.

“...Excuse me?”

-

Stringing up all the lights, getting all the streetlamps to come on, creating a light to stretch outside of the apartment complex and around the block had nothing on the shine in Eri’s eyes. While everyone was a little excited and pleasantly surprised at the sight of the lights, there was a particular joy that emitted off of the awe on Eri’s face.

Jirou, standing at the make-shift stage at the center of their home, yelled out into the microphone.

“Merry Christmas, everyone!” she shouted into the mic.

The sound that erupted out of their small band filled the air and the streets with a life long-forgotten.

Side-eying him, Toyomitsu wonders if Helmet understands the symbolic importance of what he just did.

-

She imagined that he liked the lights, since he could see them better through that visor. If that was the case, she wondered what he attributed the laughing faces of almost everyone on base to.

Even on this base, there was always the danger and the threat looming over the head. If the uncertain threats of the future didn’t plague them, the weight of survivor’s guilt seeped into their bones and wore them down. Those that needed something to do, or couldn’t rely on someone else to do everything for them like Helmet did, was suffering from other issues. So to say that having something to smile about, that they all still have the ability to smile, was heartening.

Even moreso, because it felt like the entire mood of the base had lifted. It lifted so high that they could breath and pick their heads up and stare at the collection of lights. They were mismatched and discolored, and unevenly distributed across the street. She was hard-pressed to think that she’s ever seen anything more beautiful.

Looking at it, and recognizing how relaxed people around the base were, even the really scary ones, she couldn’t help but wonder.

The boy underneath the helmet, she thought to herself, was he smiling too?

### **Toga’s Declaration**

“...To be honest, if Helmet dies, I want to die with him,” Toga blurted out once.

“Eh? A sudden love confession?”

“Hm… I guess,” the blond replied back, a smile on her face, “I don’t know about love or anything, but I didn’t really care if I was alive or not, you know? The person who changed that was Helmet, you know?” She tapped her chin before a big grin came onto her face, “Even if I’m alive, what’s there to live for? It’s not like this place would last without Helmet, anyways. If I don’t stay here, then I’m back to going through day by day in the streets.”

She shrugged.

“At that point, I might as well just die with someone who wanted me to live.”

“Damn,” Twice said, wiping away at his tears, “That’s fucking beautiful, Toga.”

Dabi wisely didn’t mention anything. He could understand her sentiment to an extent, but he knew that it didn’t apply to him.

After all, by the time Helmet died, it would only be after Dabi did. That, he would make sure of.

### **Liberation Front (1)**

There is another group of survivors out there. Apparently, it’s the closest thing to a <society> that resembles what they used to know. Well, concerning their motley group, he supposed that anything would be better. Helmet was walking into the base from another day of cleaning up the streets when he learned of this. In reality, he really wanted to grab a warm blanket and sleep the day away, since his clothes were soggy from when he spilled some of the bleach on himself.

His mood twisted at the news.

Tsukauchi (the older) and Majima, who had found the recording, played it for them.

[ This is the Liberation Army! We are the next frontier for humanity! We offer safety and security to those who wish to fight for us! ]

Deku thought that it was going to become very noisy, and then, the base would be silent again. He would be back to being alone again. For all the shit that he gave them in his heart, he knew that he’ll be a little lonely without their presence anymore. More than anything, he was glad that they would be okay. He told himself that he should be glad that they would be okay.

“So, do we believe them?” Aizawa asked. “And even if we did, there’s… a lot of things we would have to do to migrate everyone.”

“Safety and security?! That’s a fucking lie!” Twice shouted. “People who don’t fit in with their rules and structure are left for dead! People who aren’t useful are trash! What the fuck do they mean safety and security!” The blond heaved in his anger, his veins popping on his neck from his overwhelming frustrations.

“They’ll be fine since they’re upstanding citizens or heroes,” Dabi cut in. His cold eyes were lifeless, and his smile was so sharp it could cut someone. Deku hadn’t seen him like that since they met. “Lucky them. They’ll be treated better than us scumbags.” His eyes turned to Tabe to the side, “Though I doubt they’ll be kind to your kind.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Setsuno snapped back, deftly standing in front of his friend.

“...We came from there,” Compress said slowly, turning to Deku. “The people who left us for dead when you, dear Helmet, found us were them.”

The bubbling kind of anger that Deku felt when Spinner said that to him when he woke up returned in full-force. He took a deep, slow breath to release that feeling before he blinded himself with it.

“I implore you,” Compress continued, “to reconsider even contacting them. They aren’t kind to the free-spirited or the independent.”

“So, at least you guys will be okay,” Dabi said, cold eyes finding Tsukauchi. “And maybe you’ll finally stop bitching since they have so many rules you can’t even breath without doing something wrong.”

Deku really wished they would stop fishing for fights like this.

“So,” Dabi turned back so he stood right in front of Helmet, just an arm’s reach away, “What about you? We’re pretty comfy here, but I imagine that sustaining all these leeches is a drain on you, right? Are you going to leave?”

Leave?

Leaving was never an option for him. Perhaps Dabi wasn’t speaking to him. Yes, he was pretty short so maybe Dabi was speaking to someone behind him. Goodness, would it kill these people to look down sometimes?

He sidestepped the taller man and made his way to the Rental Office to drop off his supplies. If people leave, they would have to leave in the Spring, where traveling conditions would be optimal. Until then, he would have to make sure that everyone is comfortable. The people here were smart, so he was certain that they would be able to figure out what they needed to leave. All he needed was to know when the next time would be the last time.

It was a little lonely, but he wouldn’t let them down. If there was anything he could do, he would do it.

-

“Well,” Dabi said, tipping his head backwards with a long sigh, “that lets us know what Helmet wants.”

Helmet walked by them, like this didn’t even concern him. He supposed that they were lucky he managed to stay still in one spot for long enough that they could barely squeeze out the information to him. This wasn’t someone that did things at anyone else’s pace. While it normally annoyed him, right now, it was comforting.

He wouldn’t be thrown away again.

“So be it,” Enji nodded. “I plan on staying as long as Helmet does.”

Dabi clicked his tongue.

“Shame,” he sighed. “You’d be happier over there. Hailed as a Great Pro Hero and all that.”

The older man shook his head, “I am no hero. And I have no interest in a pipe-dream. If I can be of any assistance for Helmet and the future he is working towards, then I will be a pillar for his vision instead.” He closed one of his hands into a fist as he placed it over his heart, “I’ve already decided what I wanted to do with this life.”

He peered at Dabi, their gazes clashing like a violent ocean storm.

“And it seems to me that you are no different.”

Dabi scowled, but walked away.

-

Shoto closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

He liked here, with Helmet, more than he hated Enji. It was just that simple.

### Christmas

"So?"

Deku looked over to the wide grin Yamada gave him. He tilted his head to the side, and waited.

"Whatcha want for Christmas, Little Listener?"

Deku looked back forwards, leaning against the railing as he watched the snowball fight on the bottom floor.

"I haven't really thought about it," he replied.

"Hm, yeah, I don't blame you."

"What about you?" Deku asked, "What do you want for Christmas?"

The blond laughed back, "It's so weird being asked what I want, you know, since I'm old?"

Deku didn't lugh, but he did give a confused smile. Yamada supposed that this was close enough to progress.

"But it's hard to think about what else I could want. Hm... Normally, back before everything, Shota and I, always end up patroling. They were so mean about it too! Since we were single and didn't really visit our families, we always ended up on patrol. It wasn't too bad, just making sure that drunks got home and help the police keep the streets at reasonable volumes. You got your stray guys tryna make trouble, but overall, it wasn't too bad."

Yamada leaned against the railing.

"Those days, we were happy with fried chicken, cake, and some beer. It was good though. Lots of happy people in the streets, packed shoulder to shoulder, so it was warm even if it was freezing."

Deku stared at him, watching as Yamada got lost down memory lane.

He looked back forward. The pitifully small amount of lights that they managed to pull in, the small number of people that they barely managed to keep alive.

"I guess, nothing's changed."

Deku's head snapped back and the blond grinned at him.

"This year's Christmas is my first year off since I became a Pro," Yamada said proudly, "And I'm not alone!"

Deku stared and looked back down, and hoped that one day, he could be even just as half as strong as Yamada.

## Winter - Kouta-kun

### **Kouta-kun**

There was a small child. It was a simple thing and for Deku in that moment, there was nothing else he could have done. The child, clearly too tired to even scream, curled up in a tight little ball as the daywalkers shuffled closer to him. Without a moment of delay, Deku smashed the window in front of him and jumped from the second floor window to get down to the child.

He’s killed more kids than he’s ever met. If at all possible, he’d like to not kill this one.

-

This child is not alone. In fact there are people with him, also alive, also surviving. In this moment, Deku is forced to confront the fact that he is weak.

And survivors are scary.

### **Wrong time and wrong place**

In all honesty, Deku understood his own weaknesses. He had many, enough that it felt like it was all he had, but there was one thing that he hated about himself more than anything else.

This weak heart of his was infuriating. It was so easy for him to become distracting. Truly, the thing that probably hurt him and damaged him the most was his heart. It wavered dangerously and constantly.

Like now.

Somehow, after all this time, he still associated small explosions with something nostalgic. He can't quite remember who or why or what, but he knew that it was something special to him. And when the first zombie came shuffling at him, he was fine until it's chest started to glow. Or rather, the vein inside of it began to glow and shine through the gray skin. It pulsed in time with a heartbeat and then, the chest cavity would suddenly expand like a balloon.

Then, it would explode.

Deku was tossed off his feet and sent flying to the other side of the room. It knocked all the air outo hif him, but all he could think was that the explosion of a human body almost looked like a blooming flower, as it always did.

This thought brought comfort to him.

And then, several others, with their veins shining through from under their skin, shuffled in and Deku only felt resignation.

"Do you think that you can run!?"

He was surrounded on all sides, but a sudden thought occured to him. These flower-these exploding zombies- could be used. He could use them.

He abandoned his humanity, and preprared to desecrate the dead again. There was a man that was coming for his life as live-game, and there was a little boy that he had to make sure he got help. There was much to do, and no time to waste. He was going to die if he didn't fight, and if he died, then he couldn't wait for the person he can't remember anymore.

Deku got up to his knees when the walls came down and Muscular came barging in.

Sooner rather than later, he realized. Still, his eyes met the crazed grin on Muscular's face, and his heart wavered.

Again, he has to do this again.

### **Revealing “Deku”**

A popular daydream fantasy that many of them had was about the Mystery Behind the Helmet.

But with time, it fell out of priorities. It was just a little joke that they shared amongst each other, or it was something that they would come back to to share their wildest ideas and theories. Most of them and no basis, but it was just a small activity that they did.

No matter how many times they joked and brought it up, there was a quiet understanding that it was probably a good thing that they didn’t know who was under the mask. They could make all the wild speculations that they wanted, but at the end of the day, they could just assume that their silent Helmet was the most perfect person ever in their own mind.

As people who suffered through a rather desolate and hopeless time, this was more than they could ever ask for.

-

Tensei felt his heart stuttered as a child came running up to him. He was in a t-shirt and track pants as he hobbled through the snow in a pair of slippers that were far too large for him. Hawks blurred right by him, landing in front of the kid.

After all, he would recognize that Helmet anywhere.

“T-That helmet,” he said, stuttering as the whole world threatened to collapse in on itself around him, “...Where is the owner to that helmet?”

“H-He… he told me to run away!” the kid cried. He pulled the helmet off of his head, and Tensei felt his heart tighten at the sight of the sobbing child. “He said that there would be help if I kept running! He said to get someone to help because he can’t fight-and he can’t- they… they kept beating him up! And… and then I.. I-I left him… I left him behind! I-”

“It’s okay,” Hawks said, ruffling his hair. He gave a bright smile, and Tensei has no doubts that this man was once the Number Three Hero, his grin was comforting. They were all close to Helmet, but he knew that Hawks and Helmet shared a special relationship, the news couldn’t be easy to hear. “You got to the Help part,” he said, “We’ll take care of it-”

He was cut off when a sudden explosion rang through the air and shook the walls around them. Instinctively, he grabbed the child against his chest, his wings curling around them to minimize any possible effects. The three stared in absolute shock as a building that stood half a mile out shuddered and began to collapse into a vortex of fire.

“...Th...That’s where he was,” the child whispered quietly. “No… No way… No, he…”

“Hawks, get your thumb out of your ass!” Shigaraki snapped as he ran to them, “There’s something seriously wrong, let’s go! At the very least, we gotta find the body!”

The blond didn’t need anything else. He took off.

-

Deku had to say, this was probably the closest he’s been to death in a while. He took a deep breath as his eyes took in the burning building in front of him.

He tried to sit up and winced as his entire body began to pulsate. The burns, bruises, cuts, and all joined his other assortment of scars that carved up his body. He sighed deeply, and shivered violently. He couldn’t tell if the cold was because of the winter chill, the fact that he was pretty much naked without anything but this dirty rag that he managed to snag and his boxers, or because he lost too much blood. He’s not sure if he cares anymore.

His head throbbed, and it’s easy to guess what had happened. Since that last explosion that lit up the entire building, he went flying out of the building, through the glass, and crashed against some of the metal frame. Then, gravity dragged his limp body down to the ground, and here he was. The only thing impressive about this entire thing was the fact that he was still alive.

He was still alive.

It would have been nice if he was closer to the fire, if only so that it would be warm.

Around him, something fell from the sky. He looked up, snow? How beautiful, he thought, if it were snow. And then, he realized very slowly that it was ash. No, that made more sense. It couldn’t be snow. To die as snow gently descended on him would be too romantic and pretty. Ashes make more sense.

….He was dying, wasn’t he?

He thought, briefly, that he’s sorry to his mom that this was the best he could do. He thought of the people at the apartment and hoped that they would forget about him as soon as possible. He doesn’t know if he can pick his body up and throw it into the fire so that there would be nothing left. Figured that he couldn’t even do this. To the end, he would still be weak.

He hoped that Kouta was okay.

“There’s someone here!”

He took a deep breath, and feeling the footsteps and people arrive, understood that he was going to die a human, by human hands. No doubt, they could see how much of his leg was eaten, what little is left of his left bicep, and that’s just from the things that they can clearly see. They don’t know how hard Moonfish bit down or how hard Muscular hit him or how often Mustard tried his knives on him. He hoped they don’t ever find out.

And with the way the fire burned and how shocked they were at finding him, he’s certain that they won’t ever know. Everything will end with him. Even though it was selfish, he was happy that someone would know that he, Deku, was dead.

“Hey are you-”

The familiar fluttering of wings landed somewhere behind him, and Tensei stopped right in front of him. He couldn’t see the man’s facial expression, not with how blurry his eyesight was, but the way he cut himself off already told him enough.

He … probably looks even worse than he thought. He wished that he could have spared them this.

“Shit, he’s bit. He’s like… really bit. // We gotta kill him. Put him out of his misery.”

Ah, Twice. Could always count on him. It hurt, but he smiled.

“...I’ll make it painless,” a sword was drawn.

Iguchi would, too. He’s grateful for that. However, Deku sincerely doubted that he could feel any pain at all at this point. How lucky.

“No! No no no! He’s fine! It’s not infectious! Moonfish just likes eating people!”

His head slowly picked up, his heart rate increased, his eyes widened, as Kouta came running to his side. He held his helmet tightly to his chest, even tripped over his foot and tumbled down to close the distance between them. Deku’s heart ached when those desperate eyes turned to him.

“I-I brought help! I brought help! They said, they said that they’ll protect you and that they’ll help!”

Fuck, he thought, why did they let him come back?

“It’s okay! Look, I even brought your helmet back! So you don’t… please don’t leave me, too.”

Deku stared hard at the kid, the helmet he was pushing into his working hand, and couldn’t. He just. He just fucking can’t do this. No matter how much he wanted to take a break, or how much he wanted to just die and return to his mother’s side, he doesn’t think he can do it.

He couldn’t die in front of a kid.

He turned over to his side, and then to his front. He forced the remains of his trembling arms to push himself into a kneel. He took the helmet from his small, trembling hands, and slipped it on. He can’t even curl his fingers, so he let the latch dangle. He swore that someone gasped around him, but he didn’t think too hard about it. He didn’t want to think about anything anymore.

“Thank you,” he said quietly. “...Do you want to come back with us?”

But this kid looked so radiant. It hurt to look at.

“Yes! Yeah,... I’ll… I’ll go wherever you want.”

Deku nodded, and the helmet shifted a little. He knew that he took a lot of damage this time around, but he suddenly couldn’t feel it anymore. Body like lead, yes, but he didn’t feel pain. He took a deep breath and slowly made it up to his feet (foot and stub, really, with the mess they made of him) when a hand came down next to him.

He turned his head. Twice.

“...Helmet…?” he asked quietly.

He nodded back.

Twice took a deep, slow breath, before he pulled his mask off his face and reached to grab his arm. Without a second to waste, he licked the blood off of his fingers. Kouta gave a disgusted gasp, and the clone, because there was no way this was the original Twice, gasped.

“Well,” he said, “I’m not turning.”

“...Okay, so we know that he’s not infected-”

Deku pulled away from the touch, nearly crumpling back to the ground. The Twice Clone’s hand grabbed him immediately, stabilizing him as best he could. His heart broke under the kind gesture, even as the pain shot up and down his entire body. However, in the makeshift-toga and his boxer-briefs, he’s certain that they could all see how much blood he’s lost and how much flesh he was missing.

“I’m okay,” Deku said. He gave a short sigh, and rolled his neck. “Let’s go home,” he said.

He took a step, and then another, the world spun around him, and he felt like his head was stuffed with cotton.

Probably, Twice was half-dragging him moreso than he was walking himself, and he apologized over and over again, hopefully aloud. The world was hazy and he didn’t really get what’s going on. Something ran down his neck, and he wondered if he’s sweating that badly or if it was blood. He didn’t know, and not able to feel any pain, just assumed that this is a very nice and pleasant dream where he’s not infected and he can return to the place he called home.

Against the cold, he doesn’t think that he can feel anything. He can’t feel their stares or the pain, or how something is sliding down his legs. He’s… fine.

There were people who came for him. He was going to die anyways, so this was fine, right? He gave a smile to Kouta, even though he couldn’t see it, and reached out to him. The tiny fingers wrapped around one of his. This was enough. Maybe, for saving Kouta, he could be enough.

It would be nice if this dream could continue for a little bit longer.

-

They made it home.

Deku was certain that this is a dream, because the walk feels so short. He didn’t think much, and let his heart settle. It almost felt like it was a lucid dream.

Was this Hell? It was much more familiar than he thought.

It looked strangely like his apartment, and he swore that he could just see his mom standing on the railing, waving at him. Although that didn’t make any sense since his mom wouldn’t be in Hell. She was a good person. So good, in fact, that she died because she couldn’t bring herself to hurt someone else.

There was a lot of movement, because there were lots of people coming in and out in the bustle of rush hour. The thought was comforting, and then, the world went black. It must be time to wake up then. This must be a sweet start to an awful and deserving end.

If there was a higher being in the world, if there was a reason and there was someone listening, he prayed with all his heart. May the peaceful days would be protected forever, even if he wouldn’t be the one to witness them.

### **Extra - Revenge**

“Okay, you guys go and wrap that up then,” Twice said, nodding at them.

“You’re not coming with us?” Tensei asked.

“Of course not,” Dabi snorted back.

“They took care of Helmet for us,” Shigaraki pitched in.

“And we’re going to take our payment back,” Twice finished.

“Stain-y got the trail!” Toga said, waving her hand. Her smile was wide but there was a coldness edging in her eyes. “So let’s go.”

“Hero-san,” Twice called out, “We’re different from you guys. We don’t care about honor and mercy and shit like that. We live for each other.” He seemed unified in that ideal and he turned around.

Tensei watched, three roofs away, Stain stand up before he disappeared into a blur of a shadow with a red streak, where his scarf bled across the air. Even though Dabi and Shigaraki had some incredibly devastating quirks, and Tog and Twice could easily ruin lives, the person that bothered him the most was Stain.

That kind of bloodlust, the kind that Tensei felt in his bones even though Stain wasn’t even facing him and four blocks away, was dense like lead.

-

“Get your fire under control,” Stain warned.

Dabi exhaled loudly, and despite his lazy and uncaring demeanor, the fire lessened just a bit. It was rare for him to let his fire climb up to the third floor, but he was just as upset as anyone else.

### **Extra - Helmet**

As it turned out, Deku was as small as he was young. They wouldn’t know for certain until he woke up, but it was impossible to believe that he could be older than twenty.

However, a universal consensus was that they never wanted to find out like this. Many of them believed that Helmet should have told them in his own time, on his own terms. This wasn’t…

Getting the helmet off of him was a necessity. The kid was literally dying. Bleeding out and sustaining enough wounds to kill most grown adults, he would have died. He should have died. However, Chisaki was swift to Overhaul him. The bleeding didn’t stop. He’s going to wring the neck of those Pros.

No, that was a lie. He wanted to ruin all of them.

All their fluffy speeches and all their promises, but they were all trash. If Helmet didn’t save them and so obviously care about them, he would have gotten rid of them long ago. Filthy scumbags. If they weren’t going to be his meatshield, then what was the point of them anyways?

“All that remains is the injuries from the monsters,” Chisaki announced.

Natsuo looked at Helmet, tried not to think about how young he looked, and focused on the array of wounds that was still left on his body. While most of his broken bones and the worst of his injuries had been fixed, there was plenty that would need to be stitched back together.

“...God,” he whispered quietly. He took a deep breath and shook his head. He could cry and despair and wallow in his guilt later. “Alright, let’s get to work.”

But first, he needed to save this man. This was his first priority. This was his only priority.

However, if Helmet never opened his eyes again, Chisaki swore that he would send this entire base and everyone in it with him, to the other side.

-

“...He’s a kid,” Chisaki said quietly. “Of course he hid.”

He rubbed his temples. Of course he hid. No matter what happened, he had figured that Deku hid because he had to hide. Maybe it was because Helmet was a woman, and she was scared because of the number of surviving men here. Maybe it was because Helmet looked atrociously ugly, but surely, he would have at least been comfortable around Dabi. Maybe Helmet was a foreigner, scared that he didn’t look right.

No, instead, it turned out that Helmet was a young boy. It was so obvious why he hid, and it was so obvious that it made Chisaki sick.

He hid because he knew no one would take him seriously. If the top of the chain was a young kid who didn’t even have pubic hair, then no one would listen. No one would believe him. His actions would have been dismissed as reckless naivety. Chisaki was certain of this fact, because he would have brushed him off the same.

Helmet had no voice because no one would listen. He had no face because he knew no one would see him. He left them to spin their own stories and make their own conclusions, because then, they would be holding him to the ideal in their head. It was a hefty burden to bear, but since he never spoke and was never seen, it worked.

Ridiculous. He thought to himself.

“...Kai? Is everything alright?”

“We’ve been obediently playing to his tone this whole time,” he informed his longtime friend. “...No longer. We aren’t going to dance to this tone anymore.”

Kurono looked alarmed. Golden eyes turned to him.

“Helmet will live only long enough to pay back this humiliation he has done unto me.”

It was a threat. There was no way anyone listening to this man could heat it as anything but a threat. However, Kurono grew up with Chisaki. He knew what this man looked and sounded like when he was threatening someone, he’s seen it many, many times. The Chisaki in front of him, eyes brighter than anything he’s ever remembered, was not speaking of a threat.