## **Year 4:**

* Birds
* The JSDF Convoy
* Traveling Survivors (and how badly Kouta + Eri takes to their very-sheltered kids, Misoros' from 2nd movie)
* 30 Memories

## Summer + Birds

### **Birds -**

Deku was asleep. He was finally, finally asleep. He was resting, laying down on his back, in a bed, with his eyes closed. He couldn't go a few minutes without his eyebrows furrowing, but Natsuo was a quick learner.

When he wiped the sweat or held his hand, Deku's expression smoothed out. Whatever was plaguing his dreams could be chased away by the touch of a human hand. Natsuo felt immensely grateful for that.

The battle was brutal. Even though Chisaki managed to Overhaul his arm back, his other arm and entire side was a mess. Luckily, his legs were mostly intact and fine, with the exception of the bruises that coated the side of his leg, but in comparison to the rest of his body, it really was the better parts. The thought made him feel so guilty.

"I said to GET AWAY!"

Officially speaking, Todoroki Natsuo's quirk was recorded as "Ice."

However, in that moment, watching the monsters that came down with beaks made of bone pick at his patients, his friends, his companions, he brought forth a maelstrom of fire. Or at least, it started as fire, something that burned everything in its path, but it wouldn’t subside.

He spent an entire lifetime running and flinching from fire, so he was so certain that he knew what it was.

Ice so red that Natsuo thought it was fire. Ice so cold it burned through his enemies, and encased them in a solid-form of fire. He watched as the symptoms of burning flesh was encased and eroded the monsters he encased.

Burns laced up his arm, and his fire licked up the sides of the building in its rush to get to the damn flyers plaguing his home.

He couldn’t believe it.

In that instant, where he managed to save what was important to him, he was thankful that he had been born.

The ice shattered with ease, when Deku got up enough to come swinging. His fist crushed the solid bits of fire, and exploded the head of the monster on impact. The blood splattered out, painting the halls in a thick layer.

Once all the enemies were just pieces floating around in pools of blood, Deku’s hand came up to his side. Natsuo sprinted to his side, a lecture on his lips, but it died against the sticky sounds his shoes made against the ground. Deku’s sharp eyes came up to his face and it was like he lost his ability to speak.

Outside, the screaming hadn’t subsided. That was good, not that they were getting attacked, but that they were still alive. Even Natsuo knew that.

“You’re… going, right?” he asked, his hand throbbing from the burns.

“...Adrenaline,” he said. “...Do we have any adrenaline?”

“That will kill you,” Natsuo said.

Deku shook his head.

“That could save us.”

And Natsuo, who often felt as though he only knew how to sit still and be saved, never hated himself more. He turned back to do exactly that.

“...Testing, testing.” Their PA system came alive, and the panic, for a moment subsided. Everyone eagerly turned to their leader. “Everyone, this is Deku. I don’t have much time, so I’ll keep this brief.”

There was a brief silence. Those staring down their assailants and those running to a hiding place all pinned their hopes on the speaker systems. The enemy, who clearly didn’t know what or where the source of sounds came from, peered around curiously.

“...We are being attacked right now. Their numbers are large but they are light. Blunt force between their eyes or through their mouth is confirmed to work.”

As expected, Deku must have already torn through several.

“We have no backup. Our current ability on base is all we have for a counterforce. I-”

Several loud banging sounded out through the speaker, as though someone was trying to knock down a door or window.

“...But if there is anything here that you find precious, if there is anything here that you wish to protect, hold your ground. And I swear that we will see tomorrow together. Deku out.”

With that, the line died.

It was amazing how, with just a few words, the entire mood seemed to shift.

*>> Nine & Sasaki*

“I am here,” he said, stepping out. The dragon snapped and snarled right next to him, coming up to loom menacingly above them. “Hm, I am beginning to see the appeal in saying that,” he said, looking terribly amused despite the raging devastation around him.

While he, and everyone else, had heard of the things that Nine could do with his quirk, it did little to assuage the dread pooling in Sasaki’s gut.

Even as an ally, he was terrifying. He imagined that facing off against him would result in disparity and desolation. He had no doubt that if Deku didn’t make explicit instructions to protect the community here, they would have all been an unfortunate tragedy.

“My, what a mess to have occurred while I rested. Well, no longer.”

### **Birds - Backup**

“...That’s smoke.”

Chisaki stopped as he turned to Houjou, and realizing that the man wasn’t facing him, whipped around. His eyes widened as he took in the thin trail of smoke coming up to the sky.

“Oh, that’s close to our base, isn’t it?” Setsuno asked.

Chisaki hissed.

“You idiot, that is our base.”

Once that ran through their head, they started to run.

### **Birds Conclusion-**

Deku watched as the flock of bird-like demons flapped towards him. Their numbers were great, so many of them that for a moment, it was as though they made a blanket across the sky. If Deku wasn’t stuck fighting them, he’s certain that he would be in awe.

As it was, he couldn’t get a good count of them.

The one that he had underneath him started to squirm more. With his foot on its back, each wing captured by one of his hands, he watched as the worst possible thing flapped down around him. It writhed underneath him, desperate to escape, but Deku had a firm grip on it as he eyed its friends descending down around them.

These were beasts who came when the one he had cried. He tugged on its wings, and when it screamed out, saw the mass fluttering of the demons all around him. He didn’t want this. Of course he didn’t want to do this, and knowing that they were rushing as fast as they could for one of their own made everything worse. They came here, abandoning whatever it was that they were doing, because they heard the sound of one of their own crying. He really, really didn’t want this.

But he had people he wanted to protect too.

Hoping that the rest of them had gathered here, and that everyone else had bunkered down somewhere else, Deku took a deep breath. Readjusting his hold on the wings, he yanked them off.

The scream that emitted from the beast was almost human, but Deku had already resigned himself to sleepless nights. The righteous fury of the monsters who watched came flying at him. Which was fine. He was fine with this.

He understood that they were angry because he had killed many of their own. They had watched him kill one of their own in a painful and torturous way. He understood that they were angry and now were coming for him, to save the one under his foot and avenge the rest he killed. His heart ached, and he buried that feeling far away.

Maybe, if he was strong, they wouldn’t need to do this. Or maybe, if he was smart, he could find another way. Maybe, if he was a hero, everyone could be saved.

But Deku isn’t any of those. He’s a leader to all the lost and desperate that are foolish enough to follow him.

He clenched his hands into fists.

By the time he got some assistance, he was already making a pile of bodies onto the concrete. Unlike the majority of the things that he fought, they were lighter and had one main body. In addition to that, they came at him in a flurry of movement. While they didn’t hit hard, the long gashes that decorated his skin sapped at his strength through ribbons of blood.

As a result, he was as much of a mess as the area around him.

He didn’t know where his blood stopped and where their blood began. He was sticky, and he wasn’t certain what it was. His mind was swimming in and out of consciousness, to the point where he didn’t know if he was going to suddenly wake up in a pool of his own blood again. At that moment, he thought that he could forget his name, who he was, what he stood for. It was like there was a thick layer of mist all around him, obscuring his visions as he waddled through.

The only thing that was certain were the remains that laid scattered around him. Placing them, one after another into a pile, he was certain of this. These were all the ones that he killed. He did this. He was the sole person who was responsible for this. He…

...He really did deserve a fate worse than death, didn’t he?

“Deku! Deku, you need to… you need to get these checked out. Okay? I… I’m going to pick you up, alright?”

The hands that came to his shoulders were tight, and he focused in on them like they were his anchor back to reality. His eyes flitted up, and Tensei’s worried eyes stared back. His expression was pinched, and Deku briefly wondered what he was looking at that he was so concerned.

When his hands came down to his elbow, however, he saw something move. No, that’s a lie, he couldn’t have seen it, since it wasn’t like Tensei was a small person that he could see through. But he knew, there was something there. There was something, and it was hostile.

As though he hadn’t spent the last few hours getting torn apart, Deku’s hand shot up and grabbed Tensei’s shoulders and shoved him to the side. In his shock, the older man fell to a roll while one of the monsters screeched. It was missing its wing, but it catapulted itself at Deku with a ferocious roar. Its maw was wide open, fully intent on chomping down on the human.

As it came closer, Deku swung his fist up. If it had made contact, they would have learned that the mess of gore that caked their courtyard was done primarily from these swings. As it was, a jet blast blew a hole straight through it, and Gran Torino landed in front of him.

The man gave Deku a critical gaze, his expression twisting into something dark.

“What a mess,” he muttered darkly. “We need to get you to the infirmary, ASAP.”

“Deku,” Tensei was back, his face twisted into something stuck between pain and concern.

Slowly, as though he was processing the whole world at half the speed it actually was, he shook his head. He couldn’t go yet. He took a step, then another, surprisingly steady for someone who was riddled with injuries and drenched in blood. Hands, impossibly warm, came to his shoulders again, and he wondered who was shaking so hard. Tensei wouldn’t shake him, so was the ground shaking?

“Deku, please-”

“14,” Deku said, his voice coming out slowly as the world slowed down. “I let 14 away...”

Taking a few, slow breaths, he looked to where Spinner had appeared, seemingly out of nowhere. He watched as the lizardman pulled out his walkie and announced into it.

“14 stragglers! Orders from Deku to leave none alive!”

“Roger that.”

“There’s four taking off in the sky.”

“I’m on it-”

And the sounds seemed to drown out as Deku’s body swayed. The anchors at his arm were the only reason why he didn’t kiss the ground. Was he grateful?

No, he was relieved. There was no other reason why he closed his eyes in that moment and took a deep shuddering sigh. Good, that meant that he could focus on burning the rest. He tried to control his legs, but the hands were like vices that kept him where he was.

“...Burn,” Deku tried to explain. He had to do it.

“Leave it to us,” Gran Torino said. “You’ve done enough.”

A weight lifted off of his back, and Deku slowly nodded.

“I’m going to carry you now,” Tensei said, his eyebrows pinched.

With the scars that ran across Deku’s face, coupled with the fresh layer of blood that stained his skin, he doubted that it was any attractive or pleasing to see, but he managed to nod. Despite how putrid he must have smelled, Tensei smiled back. It was a shame that Ingenium wore a helmet, a long time ago, since head a very reassuring smile. Once he gave a nod, the older man scooped him up into his arms.

The feeling of being carried by someone is similar to the feeling of bleeding out. It felt like he was flying.

The monster was dead, and Deku sighed. He gave a ragged sigh as he relaxed slightly. With one hand on his side, hopeful beyond hope that none of the stitches ripped when he realized that Aizawa had this expression on his face.

“...How long have you lost your eyesight in that eye?” he asked.

Which was stupid and silly because Deku had hit the monster perfectly. It was strange for anyone to ask if there was anything wrong with Deku’s eyesight when he had knifed down a monster from over 10 feet. It was strange, and it felt like a waste of time.

It would have been, except Deku’s right eye was bandaged up. He couldn't see out of that eye. However, his sense of balance was as good as ever. His accuracy hadn’t changed in the slightest. Battle genius or not, there was no way that someone could adapt that well and that quickly to something as critical as ½ of one of their senses.

As though realizing his mistake, Deku’s expression tightened. He took a deep breath and turned to the man.

“It’s not important-”

“Then when?”

At this point, some of others had arrived to see what the commotion was about. Waking up to Aizawa, Yamada looked worriedly from his friend to the resident leader. “Hey, we heard the commotion-whoa, Deku-”

“Answer me. When?” Aizawa hissed out, “It’s not important, is it?”

“...Tokyo,” Deku admitted at last. He looked back to his feet, “I started to lose it earlier, but I stopped once we came back from Tokyo.”

### **Prioritize Garden**

Lots of things to do, lots of things to fix, lots of things to heal. Starting with managing and double-checking all their supplies all the way to managing who was going to sleep where since all the windows on the first two floors have been shattered, the base has been busy.

Since the majority of the injuries were caused by demons, there was little that Overhaul could do. As a result they were waiting for people to heal on their own, with Nine’s healing quirk used sparingly on those who were most grievously injured.

And since the most grievously injured was Deku, who politely declined any more healing, the rest of the injured kept their mouths shut about the issue.

Regardless, there were more things than ever to do.

“...The gardens?”

Deku didn’t even give Yagi a second glance.

“I… I understand that the garden is important to you but I… I didn’t think that you would uh… make it such a high priority,” the blond said, trying to word it the best he could.

From the disappointed stare Aizawa gave him, probably not.

“...We can’t bury our dead,” Deku said quietly.He took a deep breath and shook his head, “It’s alright, it’s not that important-”

“We have plenty of people that can’t help out but want to,” Tsukauchi spoke up, “especially among the younger children. I think this will be a good alternative for them as well. Having flowers, as well as a sense of unity because everyone will be put to work, will help with morale. I think this is a good idea.”

The young man dipped his head in his gratitude.

### **Back on the Street**

"The injured should stay back."

Enji's voice was stern, and his eyes never strayed from his target. Deku, looking up at his back, wondered how someone could look so reliable just by standing there. He took a slow breath before he stood up.

"Just stay down," Enji said, a frown stretching on his face, "And wait for Hawks to come-"

"You called?"

The man dropped down onto his feet, his eyes taking Deku's features in.

"Hawks." Enji, who never sounded excited to see anyone, sounded particularly lifeless when he greeted the former hero.

"Heya," the blond greeted lazily. His eyes remained on Deku, however, and he stepped closer. One of his wings wrapped around Deku's back, more out of habit than anything, and he gave a charming smile. When he took a step closer, Deku placed his hand on his chest and pushed him backwards.

Immediately, his face fell.

Somewhere, behind them, Dabi's chortling laugh rang.

He pulled his wings back, folding them against his back before Deku looked off to the right. Whatever he saw had him on his feet and walking over, Hawks trailing right behind him.

Enji gritted his teeth.

Stay put, he said. Why was that so hard? What was the point of Hawks coming if he was just going to enable Deku anyways? Scowl in place, he spun on his heel to go after Deku.

If he wanted anything done, he better damn well do it himself.

### **Questionable Teams**

“No, I got a question,” Kaminari said, raising his hand. “Is uh… who decided the teams?”

He, like any good, young, healthy boy, grew up admiring heroes. Of course, that was pretty much a relic of the past at this point, but it used to be everything to him. Just a few years ago, he daydreamed daily about being a hero of his own. He would be so cool and girls would love him. His face would be everywhere and everyone would know his name.

But standing between Sakamata and Stain, he felt his heart waver.

“...Deku did,” Aizawa said, Deku conveniently right next to him, “Something wrong?”

Kaminari hesitated. He really didn’t know where anyone stood anymore. By all means, when Deku was unmasked and revealed to be a kid his age, he didn’t think that they would still listen and abide by his words. Deku was his age, didn’t know his name, ran away from social interactions, and Kaminari was honestly scared that if he said anything resembling impolite to him, someone was going to disintegrate him or burn him. Either way, there would be nothing left of him.

“I uh… just wanted to know why these teams were formed like this,” he said, hoping he didn’t sound too rude.

“...Teams are good,” Deku said.

Kaminari grimaced back, he really hoped this wasn’t going to turn into a lecture. Actually, he wished he never spoke up at all.

“They remind us that we need to come home.”

He paused. And around him, the others stared at Deku in just as much surprise.

Since he was Helmet, Deku was always alone. He moved by himself, and he never waited for anyone to come with him. Often, it felt like he was just dragging everyone along for the ride. This could be chalked up to the fact that there was no one else here, so it became natural for Deku to be alone. Kaminari knew that plenty of the adults, especially Sasaki and Inui, tracked down Deku to lecture him about the importance of teamwork.

For them, survivors that have grouped together or have been with other survivors, it was natural to group together. It made survival chances go up. People can rely on each other to watch their backs. They can cover more ground, have more eyes, the list goes on and on.

“And Kaminari has good energy,” he said. “It’s relieving.”

And Kaminari really did take it to heart.

## Subway

“So are you uh… like… better?”

Deku looked to where Twice sat on the table. The man opened his hands up and made a few wild motions.

“Like, you were down an arm earlier this month. And then the whole bird thing happened so you were out-out for like a week. You sure you wanna go now? There? It’ll still be there next week.”

He gave a curt nod.

“There’s no need to push it off,” he explained easily.

### **Shouji & Deku - packing**

"...You know, I realized this a while ago but I always wanted to ask," Shoji said, "Your bag is empty."

Deku looked to Shoji. "I can carry more things back like this," he said.

Shoji nodded. That made sense, but.

"Even though we won't be back for a few days?"

Mioriya shrugged back.

"If I don't come back, someone else can use that food."

It was sound logic, even if it felt a little lonely.

"Don't think too hard about it," he said. "At this point, it's just habit."

However, it didn't sound like that when he said it.

"Then, when you went out... you didn't take water or food with you?"

Deku's jaw clicked shut, eyes wide as he realized what he had admitted himself to.

"I see," Shouji said.

"...Keep it to yourself," Deku said.

"Too late," Aizawa said as he walked by, "We'll talk about this later."

Their base-leader sighed, resigning himself to his fate.

### **Twice: the Villain**

“I… I never told you this, but the truth is that before all of this, I was a villain.”

In all honesty, he never hid it. Twice was his villain name, and he’s certain that the people who recognized him had probably warned Deku at one point or another about him. And Magne. And Dabi. And Toga, even though she’s super cute. Oh, and Compress too, huh? He’s certain that Stain was suspicious enough to be his own brand of evil, but he couldn’t quite name it.

Anyways, the point was, it turned out that there were a bunch of them here.

Well, not to toot his own horn or anything, but he was definitely one of the more well-known of them. He’s gotten in a lot of trouble before, and if the world didn’t end, he would have continued to get in trouble. Now…

“I did a lot of bad things, and hurt a lot of people. So, you shouldn’t be surprised when I lie and stuff,” he continued, “Because that’s what a villain would do.”

He and him and other him and other-other him pushed and pulled against the large slab that was over his leg, his other double pulling Deku out from underneath the widened gap he and his clones made.

“So I won’t run when you tell me to. I won’t do as you say,” he said. “Not listening, is exactly what a villain would do, right?”

He grinned, wide and proud, and his other clones started to cheer.

“Yeah! We got your back whether you want us or not!”

“It’s a package deal! You can’t get rid of us!”

“We’ll kill you like this!”

“Your biggest mistake was ever helping us!”

He was a villain. He didn’t listen to rules or follow social norms. He didn’t care about things like that, and wanted to watch things fall apart. He didn’t care about anything and did things as he pleased. He wanted the big and the glamorous, and more importantly, he wanted someone to share it with.

One of his clones helped prop him up.

And protecting his friends, the people that accepted him, the person that treasured him, was something that he would do. Especially if that was something Deku didn’t want him to do.

“W...wait,” Deku’s soft voice called out.

Twice turned his back to him, ready to take on the whole damn world if it was for his friends. Because he was a villain.

That’s what villains did.

Deku didn’t have the courage to say it, but he was the same.

He was the same kind of shit that Twice claimed he was. The same kind of scumbag that Setsuno talked about. He was the worst of the worst.

It was about time that he remembered that.

### **Thoughts on a Dying Leader**

Deku knew that the world would be a better place without the monsters. And he also knew that many people on base didn’t like him because he made them question things. In many schools of thoughts and the rules that they tried to enact, he stood as an outlier that made them curb their tongue.

Which was fine. He knew that he wouldn’t last long like this. And then, he will pass away and they will no longer be held down by him. They would be free.

He didn’t realize that helping someone live put shackles on their person, but now he did. He wasn’t sure how to cut those bounds off, so he’ll kill everything first. Then, he would pass on. Then, they’ll be free and safe to do as they please.

It was, in his mind, the perfect plan and an ultimate goal.

Which was why they needed to clean out the subway (among other things) sooner rather than later.

## JSDF convoy

### **Saving - KamiDeku**

“...When you do things like this, I feel like you do trust me, us,” Kaminari said, quickly correcting himself. “So, how come you never ask for help anyways?”

Deku soldiered on, and for a moment, Kaminari wondered if he was going to be ignored.

“...If Dabi had the choice of saving me or Enji, who do you think he’ll save?”

That was a no brainer.

“You,” he replied back.

Deku nodded back, and the conversation ended there, as though that was all he needed to explain this.

“No, I still don’t get it,” Kamninari said, stopping Deku before he could leave.

The young man stared at him and gave a quiet sigh. “It means that, while saving me, he’s not saving someone else.”

### **Shoji - Complaints From Someone Else**

It was really hard to complain.

It was mainly because Deku didn't complain, and even when soaked in his own blood with broken bones protruding out of his skin, he made sure to finish out his patrol. Of course, this was far and few in between (thank god), but that didn't make it any easier. He snapped his fingers back into place, and pulled some duct tape out of his backpack. With an ease that Shoji would never be able to imitate, he taped his hand down to one of his daggers before he placed the duct tape back, and rumaged around for something. He pulled a water bottle out before he shouldered his backpack. Already, he was on his feet and ready to keep moving.

He passed the water bottle to Shoji.

"Here."

And more importantly, it made any general complaints they had sound so miniscule and uninportant in return.

Shoji, who was never one to complain to begin with, found it hard to even groan about the shoulder he scraped on the way down.

"...I'm okay," he said. It didn't feel right to use any supplies.

"Hey, they're over here!" the loud voice came from above. Shoji looked up to where they had fallen from.

It looked like the building flooring had broken through, and they fell into the underground parking deck of some sort. Needless to say, Shoji's fingertips were tingling from how hard they fell. It looked like the car had broken their fall. Well, he should just be happy that there was something that broke their fall.

Relief filled him to know that the others had come back for them. There were two types of people that came to patrol with them. The first type, which Shoji also counted as, were the type to look around for a way down and call out.

"Are you gentleman alive down there?!"

Like how Compress called out for them.

And then, there were the other type of people. The type that came sweeping down. Normally, it was Hawks, or other people that can safely jump to the ground.

Dropping to the ground with matchin expressions of annoyance, Miruko and Enji dropped down next to them.

"Injuries?" he asked while Miruko looked around where they fell.

Even after all this time, Enji felt just as imposing as he did when they first met. Shoji looked up at him, still, even after all the time and the extra foot he grew.

"I..." his shoulder ached, "I'm fine," he lied instead.

Blue eyes took in his features carefully. For a brief moment, Shoji thought that he was going to be called out. To his shock, the man nodded back before turning to Deku.

But where he and Enji only had a few inches between them, Enji still towered over Deku like a building.

Still, Deku didn't pay him a second of mind. Enji didn't say much, but his eyes fell to his hand.

"...You-"

Deku walked by him and to where Miruko was, uncaring and dismissive. Enji's expresison twisted to one where Shoji thought that Deku would be carrying burns on the way back, but he took a deep breath instead.

"Incoming!" Miruko called out, killing any other conversation that could have started.

"Oh jeez, Shoji-kun, that looks awful."

Shoji looked up to where Makoto's concerned expression was staring at his shoulder. He dropped his gaze into his lap.

"Oh," he said quietly. "It's not that bad."

"Is that why you aren't using your arm as much as you used to?" she asked.

He jolted, eyes snapping up to her unimpressed expression. She came around to take a seat next to him on the couch, keeping a respectful distance between them, but one that would easily be crossed if either of them reached for the other.

"Let me guess," she said, thoughtfully tapping her finger on her chin, "You probably thought that, since Deku-kun wasn't complaining, you didn't deserve to, right?"

Shoji frowned, was he that easy to read?

"My brother was the same," Makoto said. "I think that it's pretty stupid though."

His bottom lip trembled, and he narrowed his eyes at her.

"I mean, you guys aren't the same person, you know? Different things bother you, and it makes sense that your pain threshold is different too."

"...What?" Shoji said, struggling to internalize the words.

"For you and my brother, you guys probably think that you have to learn how to hide your pain so you don't worry anyone else. But you know, for Deku, he's been alone for a long time. He probably hasn't learned how to express that he's hurt."

Shoji frowned, because that sounded stupid. Most people cried when they were in pain, why would Deku be any different? From a young age, people are always taught to hide their pain and stop crying, after all.

"Well, what I wanted you to take from this conversation is that you are your own person. And hiding injuries like this might result into something that can't be healed later."

He hesitated.

"Isn't it better to throw it all in now?" he asked. "Since if we don't do everything we can now, we'll die and we'll lose that future anyways."

Makoto swatted his head. It didn't hurt, but the shock of the blow had him reeling backwards in shock. He cradled his head in his hands, eyes wide.

"Don't be stupid. It's not the just the two of you here. We have plenty of reliable people here to put to work."

Her grin was bright and shining, and she left like that. As she did, Shoji noticed that her belt was fully stocked with magazines.

Later, he went to Nine to get it looked at.

### **JSDF convoy**

When they woke up, it was to the smell of something sweet and delicious.

“Why … did you help us?”

Deku’s arm was in a sling and the way he slightly leaned to the side was the irrefutable proof that they weren’t good people. They were lost people, drunk on their incurable loneliness as they shuffled through their life, wondering what was reality and what was the nightmare.

“If I was in your shoes, I would have done the same thing.” he explained quietly.

If the look the lizard guy shot him was any indication, it was a full-faced lie. But still, he appreciated it.

### **JSDF Base Remains (enter Koiichi)**

“Wow…. More weapons.”

### **getting sick (2)**

Aizawa's eyes ran down the numbers. And then his hand ran through his hair. He wasn't looking forward to explaining to Deku that they lost nearly all of their detergent. They'll salvage what they can, but the numbers were all there, and he knew what Deku would do.

He, knowing him, wouldn't do anything. He wouldn't close his eyes and sigh deeply, he wouldn't berate them, he wouldn't hold grudges or anything. Actually, assuming Aizawa even got his attention, he might not even nod or care, and just collect the report for later. And then, when later came, risk his life to get something that they could live without again. Just thinking about it brought a headache to the front of his head.

Aizawa honestly and truly considered just not reporting it.

He walked by the room, saw that the office windows were open and peered in. Indeed, sitting at the makeshift table made of several other plastic tables of different sizes and shapes, Deku was looking at the paper in front of him.

From the rather empty-looking pile on his table, Aizawa could tell that he would be the first to turn in his reports.

He knocked, probably louder than most would consider polite, but it wasn't like he knocked down the door like MT LADY did that first time either. He didn't bother waiting any longer, dropping his hand to the doorknob, and let himself in.

"Here, the inventory," Aizawa said as he came in. "Where do you want it?"

Deku didn't even twitch. His eyes were focused on what was in front of him. Occationlly, when Aizawa caught him like this, he doesn't understand why this kid hadn't died yet. His focus was uncannily pinned in to a focal point, and he clearly lost sight and sense of everything around him while he was focused.

Huffing through his nose, Aizawa stepped forward.

"Deku, have you had lunch yet?"

No answer. He sighed. He stepped forward, understanding what kind of day today was, and placed the report on the corner of the table.

And then, Deku jerked. His hand ripped away from his paper, pen resting in a backhanded grip and Aizawa jerked backwards out of reflex. Another moment passed, wide green eyes staring at Aizawa in shock-like he hadn't heard nor seen the man coming, and Aizawa narrowed his eyes in turn. There was a sheen of sweat across his brows, and his eyes looked glazed.

He reached over, slowly, and placed the back of his hands on his forehead. The heat almost made him jerk backwards, but Deku leaned into the touch. He sighed deeply through his nose, moving his hand to cup his cheek instead.

Figures.

"Tell me what you're looking through. I'll finish it up for you, and you go get some sleep."

He blinked, really slowly, and Aizawa wondered if he was even concious.

"It's fine," he said, his voice so quiet that Aizawa thought that he dreamed that he heard it. "I'm not-"

"If it's fine, right? Come get some lunch with me."

Deku was quiet, but Aizawa was patient.

"C'mon," he said, voice quiet like he was coaxing kittens to come to him, "You'll feel better with some food."

"...But..."

"It'll still be here when you come back," he said, "I'll help you when we get back."

And Deku closed his eyes for so long that Aizawa thought that he had fallen asleep. Right when he thought to just pick the guy up and take him to the nearest couch and calling Nemuri to grab some blankets, Deku opened his eyes just as slowly, a smile growing on his face.

"'When we get back', huh?" he said quietly. He turned to get out of the chair, and Aizawa's hand moved to his shoulders to help stabilize him up. He brought his hand up to his head, a wistful smile on his face, and Aizawa wondered why Deku could only be honest in these moments. "I didn't think that we'd ever get to say that."

On occasions like these, Aizawa felt the creeping shame return to the forefront of his head. It was strange, how they all could live in the same place for years on end but still have completely different expectations of daily life.

He buried the rage that boiled over when this shame ignited it. He tucked it away to be examined later, and kept Deku's uncomfortably hot body against his. After something to eat, maybe some medicine so that he could rest.

Deku stabilized on his own feet, looking even more tired than he did before. He covered his eyes with his hand, and took a deep breath. Focusing forward, he offered a small smile to Aizawa and Aizawa grabbed the door for him.

Aizawa didn't mention it, but Deku left his helmet on his desk. Was he relaxed enough to leave it behind? Was his fever devastating his ability to make decisions? Did he trust him, them, enough that he didn't think he needed it?

He watched as Deku ran right into the wall. No, no, it was definately the fever.

### **Jiro’s Turnaround**

"W-Wait," Jiro said, "I'm... I'm out of bullets."

It was shameful, she knew that, but hiding it would be even worse. Besides, knowing Deku... she watched as the man pulled his handgun out of his holster and pulled some extra magazines out of his back pouch. He handed them to her, and took his gloves off. He stuffed the gloves into his back pocket while Jiro took the weapon gratefully.

"I won't let you down," she swore.

He paused, and turned back to her.

"...The only thing that we need to do is return to base," he said. "There is nothing more important than that."

She stared at him, her eyes watering. She clenched her jaw tightly and gave a curt nod.

"...Ready?" he asked quietly.

She gave a grin.

"Let's go home, Deku," she said. "We got people waiting for us."

The man in the helmet nodded, before he stood up and started to walk through the hallway.

In her head, Jiro knew that Deku was alone before they met. He spent a long period of time, probably before the whole 'end of the world' being by himself. It was pretty obvious, when they considered how bad he was at talking and sharing his position. And even though she knew that, she was still caught off-guard at how well he moved alone.

There weren't many monsters that they encountered, and between Jiro's hearing and Deku's swings, they had the upper hand. Making it out would have been easy until they heard wild gunfire from outside. Rushing to the window, Jiro stared as Kaminari and Tamaki were surrounded on all sides from the same group of monsters as before. In total, there were fourteen of them.

Without another word, Deku flung something at the monsters, nailing one in the head. The head splattered outwards, as though it had been shot by something.

Jiro stared at Deku, shocked that he could throw something at this distance with accuracy, until she realized that his fingers were bleeding. When he pulled his hand back and threw something again, even though his hand was empty, she came to a halting realization.

He was flicking his nails at the monsters.

Why? She had a gun.

Oh, she had the gun.

She took aim. But Deku's bleeding hand opened up in front of her.

"Loud," he explained easily as he started on the second hand.

He flicked out four nails before Kaminari and Takami regained control of the situation. They looked towards them and waved and Deku took a step back.

Following him down and out, Jiro felt so stupid. Why did she hesitate? Even if she had fired, the sound would have distracted them enough that they could handle the rest. Or better yet, why did Deku stay by her side, even though he would have normally jumped right into the crossfire?

What a stupid question. Of course Deku didn't leave her on her own. She stood there, a weapon in hand, and didn't fire when she saw two of her own getting mauled. All that training and demanding to join patrol, but she ultimately chose not to pull the trigger. Of course Deku didn't leave her side.

"...You know, when you guys said that you were going to pull your own weight and stuff," Toga commented when Jiro came into the gunrange. "But as it turned out, you're all talk, aren'cha?"

She gave a toothy grin as she emptied her magazine. Jiro gritted her teeth, but didn't say anything.

"What's the matter? Are you going to cry again? Hm, maybe you'll call one of those sweet heroes to wipe your tears and tell you that you'll be stronger one day?"

Jiro stopped firing. She aimed the gun down, just like she was trained to ("You wouldn't want to accidentally fire and hit someone you didn't mean to kill"), and took a deep breath. As soon as she thought that she had control over her temper, she proved herself wrong.

"W-What's your issue?" she hissed. "I'm trying my best. I made my mistake, and I won't make it again."

The blond pulled her gun back, putting it back into the holster before turning to the young girl at her side. The unsettling grin didn't change.

"I don't believe you," Toga said, laughing brightly. "But I mean, it's fine since no one died this time, right? Everyone made it back with minimal injuries, so this whole thing was pretty much a victory, wasn't it?"

Jiro, who still felt so stupid for hesitating and waiting for orders, who still remembered the hopelessness she felt when her parents hid her in the closet when monsters came tearing into her their home, felt everything bubble up inside of her until it hit a boiling point.

"Then what am I supposed to do?" she screamed out. "What can I do? I don't know how to fight! I just learned how to fire a gun! I don't want anyone else to die trying to save me! I don't want to be left alone because someone tried to save me! I-" she took a heaving breath in, her frustated tears making her eyes burn hotly and the air in her lungs turned thin. "I don't want to be weak."

She scrubbed at her eyes. After her outburst of emotion, the only thing left was the shame inside of her for exposing herself like this to the blond.

"...If you're sick of being so weak, then get stronger. If you're sick of being useless, then become useful," Toga said bluntly. Jiro's eyes snapped up to Toga's face, where her grin had turned into something more gentle and well, sane. "But don't become too useful, because I'll kill you if he starts to use you more than me."

Jiro stared at her for a moment, and that hopeless bundle of emotions converted into something else.

"...Not," she said quietly, before clearing her throat and glaring right back at Toga, "if I kill you first."

There was a brief moment of shock, and Jiro couldn't believe that she actually said that, and meant it. However, now that the words were out, she wanted to uphold them.

She didn't want to be a burden to anyone anymore. She didn't want to be the default person that has to be looked after and saved.

"Ehhh, looks like I should step up my game too."

This time, she won't be the person that sits and waits in that closet while her family is torn from her hands.

This time, she'll fall with them.

### **DabDek - to call for help**

Deku leaned against the wall, his shoulder and head hunched up as he tried his best to breath slowly through his nose. His hand came up to his ribs, gently prodding at it to see if it was broken. There was something embedded, a stick of some sort, sticking out of his thigh, but it didn't mess with his breathing like his ribs did. Since he could still walk, he assumed that the leg-injury wasn't actually that bad.

"Hey there, Sweetheart."

Deku turned so that his back was leaning against the wall instead. Looking up, he met Dabi's cool blue eyes.

"Looks like you took a heavy hit," he murmured quietly. He kneeled in front of him, "Do you want me to take this out?"

Deku placed his hand on the stick and yanked it out. Dabi's eyebrow arched.

"Alright, that works too."

"Burn."

The man stilled. Dragging his eyes to the wound and then back up to the vizor.

"You got it, boss."

He stood up, placing his hand on Deku's shoulder and pushing him against the wall more firmly. He placed the other hand on the open wound, feeling the sticky blood tainting his palm. Just touching it, he understood that Deku had this wound for a while.

He closed his eyes and called his fire. An amount that wouldn't kill the person he was holding. He never needed to control his fire like this. However, he wouldn't mess this up.

"You could have called me."

"I know."

"If you knew then why didn't you..." his voice trailed, as he realixed that Deku had answered after all. "You... knew? And you still didn't call me?"

Deku nodded.

"I knew you'd find me."

Dabi's hand gripped his shoulder tighter, sitting on an tight ball of anxiety. "I can't believe you." he murmured.

He shook his head in disbelief. His hand came up to show Deku the stain of blood on his hand. It wasn't more than just dried and burnt bits anymore.

"You don't have to wait."

Deku placed one of his hands on Dabi's chest and pushed him back. When the older man leaned back, he straightened up. Without another word, he continued to walk down the street. Dabi took a deep breath, really thinking that he was used to this by now and feeling stupid for ever expecting different, when Deku turned back.

"Ready?"

...And Deku had never done that before.

His heart flip-flopped in his chest as he quickly closed the space between them. The two walked almost side-by-side down the street, and Dabi never thought he would be one of the pathetic people who could feel moved from this simple gesture.

"So, where to?"

Deku lifted his bat and pointed at a nearby building.

"Cleaning."

Dabi blanched. In a normal world, with society functioning, he's certain that Deku would be the type of guy who would choose the worst first date destination, like a haunted house or something.

It... sounded a lot better than he thought. Dabi would have gone.

"Hm, alright," he said. His eyes slid to Deku. "Let's go then."

Wherever, whenever, whatever. It wasn't like Dabi had anything better to do.

### **sakamata - injuries**

Naturally, people got injured. Going out and fighting, or staying at home and working, accidents happened, injuries occurred.

Sakamata groaned, pain greeting him even before he opened his eyes.

A hand came down to his head.

"Easy," a voice, soft and light like wind rustling grass on a particular spring day, "I won't let anything happen to you."

And even though he couldn't place whose voice this was, he felt comforted. Sakamata relaxed, letting sleep guide him away.

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The next time he opened his eyes, he was back on base.

"If you're well, get up and leave," came a voice from the side.

Eyes slid over to the unimpressed expression on Chisaki's face.

Yellow eyes stared at him before they rolled up to the ceiling, "Please," he added, the sarcasm as thick as it was sharp, "If you could find it in your kind heart to do this small favor for me."

Sakamata narrowed his eyes.

"Well?" Chisaki asked, his smile smug on his face and eyes empty and devoid of emotions. "What's the matter? Does something still ache? Perhaps it's age. I can't do much for that."

"I'm fine," Sakamata bit out, if only so that he could leave sooner.

Chisaki dared to look affronted, raising an eyebrow at him.

He took a step away from the door, and motioned at it.

"Then, by all means, after you."

God, what awful bedside manners. Why was this guy in charge of their wellbeing?

"I hope you're not bullying your patient."

The man straightened, eyes suddenly bright, and he gave a polite bow as Deku walked in.

"It was just a joke," Chisaki said.

Deku stared at him for a moment and then nodded.

"I'm glad that you guys have become such good friends."

Sakamata repressed a shudder at the words. Despite the pleasant smile on his face, the former yakuza's eyes lost all life.

"Hm, it must have been all the times he was in and out of consciousness," he replied back dryly. "More importantly, why are you up and about?"

Deku tilted his head to the side, where a new scar stretched from his earlobe down into his shirt, shiny and pink where it was newly formed.

At the sight of it, Chisaki's entire demeanor changed. He stood up, eyes narrowed and the air around him turned tense as he walked up to the smaller man. His hand came up, pushing back at his hair to get a better look, and Deku closed his eyes and allowed it. The action of an omega letting an alpha that close to his neck was intimate, even if it was actually a patient and his doctor.

All in all, it felt like Sakamata was intruding, even though this was his room and he was also a patient and had no say in staying or leaving since they were standing at the door.

"It could have been done better," Chisaki gave his final verdict, a scowl on his face as he stepped away. "I'll kill that bastard."

Green eyes peered up at him, gentle in their gaze, but heavy in a way that Chisaki couldn't maintain eye contact. He clicked his tongue and stepped to the side.

"Sakamata-san," Deku said, stepping into the room, "How are you feeling?"

Behind him, Chisaki dryly called out, "Great. He was on his way out."

Deku didn't even twitch, settling his gaze on Sakamata.

"I'm fine," the former pro said, "I just woke up."

There was a long silence to follow his words. If Deku's uncannily focused eyes weren't pinning him down, he would have assumed that the man didn't hear him.

"I see."

"I was... on my way out," Sakamata added, ignoring the snort Chisaki gave out.

"...May I accompany you?"

Something that Chisaki was working with snapped. Somehow, he felt a threat for his life from a man who wasn't even looking at him.

"That would be greatly appreciated," he said, because a mere death threat wouldn't dissuade him. "My deepest thanks."

Deku's smile, small and confident, met his.

## Traveling Survivors

### **Kouta + The Incident with Survivors**

Mahoro Shimano & bro: Mahoro Katsuma

Kouta stared at the group of survivors. There were about twelve of them. All of them were in varying states of disarray. Their clothes were torn, they were dirty and some were injured. Weapons were bent, dented, dirty, and just as tattered as their clothing and backpacks. Their eyes and cheeks were sunken in, a product of relentless unrest and a bad diet.

It had been a long time since Kouta had seen anyone like them. No one on base made lightly of their health and well-being.

"A... child?"

God, Kouta thought to himself, he hated adults. Why did he have to find survivors? Why did they have to be a group of adults? And since they're out and about like this, they're probably arrogant and haughty because they think it's amazing and noteworthy to have survived this long. Since they're old and Kouta is young, they're going to be especially annoying. Out of all the people in their scouting group, why did he have to be the one to find a lousy group of adults?

No, that's a lie, there were a small child among them. Two, actually, since a woman had a toddler in her arms. 12 adults, two children. 14 total then.

"Are you... alone? Do you want to come with us?"

"No," Kouta said, putting his gun back in its holster. He grabbed his walkie right as one of them hissed out.

"A gun? Why does a child like you have a gun?!"

Kouta rolled his eyes. Adults. Wasn't it obvious why he had a gun? In this day and age? Did they think that he was out on a walk or something? Why do people have guns if not to kill something?

"Kid, that's very dangerous to have. It's not a toy. Why don't you give it to this oji-san instead?"

Kouta was going to strain his eyes from how hard he was rolling them. He pulled his walkie out from his pocket. The only danger these strangers were was probably being so damn annoying. Can't they just shut up and be assisted quietly?

"Survivors by the Westside," he announced into the walkie.

"On my way," the walkie crackled back to life.

"That... a walkie?"

"Wait... are you apart of a group?"

Kouta thought it was pretty fucking obvious, given his equipment and the fact that he had a walkie-talkie that someone else answered, but nodded. He once heard Hakamata explain that sometimes shock could really ruin someone's regular thinking. Maybe this was one of those times, and they weren't that dumb afterall.

"Yes," he said.

"C-could it be?" their eyes shined as they regarded him, "Is your group with Kaname? Are we finally here?"

Kouta frowned and shook his head. "No, that's not who we are. Are you going somewhere?"

If they were going somewhere, didn't that mean that they could leave? Personally, Kouta didn't like people. He especially didn't like other survivors. The people at base were occasionally tolerable, but if he had a choice, he'd rather not spend any more time with them than he absolutely had to.

He couldn't help but think that this was a good thing. These were people who had a destination somewhere else, not here. They could just send them on their way and be down with it. In fact, he was certain that it would be better to send them on their way. It would be better than trying to add them into their life, when he was almost certain that these people who scoff at the fact that Deku was their leader because they were ignorant like adults were.

"Yes, we received a broadcast that there's a group by the Bay area that promised a safe zone..." one of the men said slowly. They looked around at each other before diverting the line of questioning. "Uhm, so are there any adults in your group? Like an older person that we can talk to about it?"

"Hey, I don't think so. Why would they send a child out here by himself?"

They weren't whispering that quietly, and Kouta heard it all. It was clear that these adults think that children are just some accessories. They are trophies to brag off because they worked so hard to keep them safe and coddled, but rarely mourn them if they die. He knew this pattern.

"If they're not treating you well," the man who was half-starved said to Kouta, who hit his second growth spurt this year, "Do you want to come with us?"

"What are you saying?" One of them hissed out. "Kid has better equipment than us! He's balling!"

"Do you... Have extra supplies? Please we have two kids, " the woman carrying the child said.

Kouta narrowed his eyes. Did he really have to help? Did he really have to listen? These people were using their children as a reason to why all of them should be given free supplies and help, without ever offerong what they could do.

Most definitely, they wouldn't take well to the fact that Deku was their leader. He took a deep breath, because no matter how much he didn't like them, he knew what Deku would do. And in the absence of a leader, he should do as his leader would.

"...We can probably help a little," he said. Rolling back on his heel as he heard someone call his name.

"Kouta-kun!"

He raised his hand to where the younger Iida and Spinner came running up to him. Of course, Iida made it to him much faster, but they both waved at Spinner and waited for the man to catch up to them after a few moments.

"Kouta-kun, this is much farther than the original plan," Iida said firmly. "That's a very bad habit to get into."

Kouta shrugged back, "I saw something move and I followed it. Turned out to be alive." He motioned to the ground behind him.

"Then you should have reported that first," Iida said. Next to him, Spinner grimaced at the group of survivors, no doubt coming to the same conclusion that Kouta did. "Any injuries?" he asked.

"They're good enough to walk around," the young man reported back.

"No, you," Iida said, "How are you?"

Kouta felt something warm and fuzzy grow inside of his heart. Before he knew it, his face grew hot and he looked away.

"I'm okay, too," he said, scolding himself for getting so flustered over something so routine. He cleared his throat. They don't want to stay," he said, quickly changing the topic. "They're going somewhere else."

The lizardman nodded. He looked them over.

"Hm, that's good. Why haven't they left yet?"

"Wait, please, just a little bit. We just..." one of them eyed them, eyeing their clothing and equipment longingly. "Please, you said a little bit of help."

Spinner's eye widened as he spun to Kouta, "Did you truly? Promise them help?"

Kouta blinked back, taken back from the intensity that the man leveled him with and slowly nodded.

"...That's... what Deku would do," he said.

"Yes," Iida nodded next to him, "This was the right things to do," he said. "I'm sure that Deku will understand. Helping someone can not be the wrong thing."

Kouta, who looked more and more disbelieving the more Iida spoke, gnawed on his bottom lip. Maybe he was in the wrong. Looking at the way Spinner's face twisted like he was watching a train-wreck in slow-motion, he couldn't help but think that.

"Can't we just take care of this now, and send them on their way?" he asked quietly.

"Normally, I'd agree," Spinner nodded, his face twisting into a grimace. "But if they're traveling through, then I'm sure that Deku will want to get any information."

The revelation made Kouta's eyes widened.

"...Well, you guys were lucky you didn't run into the trigger-happy ones first," Spinner said, turning to the group of strangers. "Fair warning, there's plenty of us who will be looking for a reason to kill you. Do your best not to give them one. If you can play along, we'll take you to get some supplies at least."

At that, the three gave the group of strangers a cold look.

"This way," Spinner said, stepping back to lead the group back.

"I'll get the back," Kouta said.

Iida gave a small salute, "I'll head back and let them know we're coming."

"Ah, thanks."

It may look like extra work, but Kouta realized that it was because they didn't want the survivors hearing the report. The inkling feeling that he did something wrong worried it's way further into his heart.

He shouldn't have pursued this.

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Takahiro Takeshi was a normal business man before this whole thing blew up in his face. He was the general manager, making his way up corporate ladder. He and his wife had three kids, all of whom were at a dorm school, and he hadn't been able to get in touch with them. His wife didn't make it past the first three months. Since then, he had been a part of several survivor groups.

That's why, he knew for certain that this group would never survive.

He and the 11 other adults here managed to scrape by so far by living cautiously. They only moved when they were certain that it was safe and doable. Their safety and security was the most important thing. They've all come from other groups that had fallen apart. They knew a thing or two about survival at this point.

And taking everything that they knew and neatly tossing it out the window, was the person that stood at the top of this group.

"Deku, guess what I found today!" Kouta, who seemed to just be an angry boy just a few moments ago, went bouncing up to the group of people standing in front of a giant bonfire. A streak of ash and cloud stretched up to the bright blue skies.

Takahiro felt all the color drain out of his face.

They were burning bodies. There were a large pile of bodies, taller than Kouta, piled up and burning. The smell was absolutely atrocious, and Takahiro shot a hand out to keep the children from getting closer. There were some things that they wanted to protect the innocent from.

However, next to the burning pit, stood former Pro Hero Endeavor.

Takahiro felt his jaw loosen. The stench wafted into his mouth and poisoned him from the inside out.

Number Two here was here. With a ugly scar running from his forehead to his chin, he otherwise looked as though he was about to go out for a picnic or something. In a pair of dark denim pants and a sleeveless hoodie, that exposed his bare arms to the eyes, the second highest ranked Hero stood, next to the pile of bodies. His arms flexed and his muscles contorted with every move, strength brimming under the skin. Bright blue eyes watched over the fire, as though he was there to make sure that the campfire wouldn't blaze out of control, instead of watching bodies burn into nothing.

Looking at him and just him, no one would ever think that the world had ended.

The Deku that everyone kept referencing turned. He was just a little bit taller and larger than Kouta. Perhaps, and he prayed for this with all his heart, this was the person that Kouta was attached to like a brother or something, but not the leader of this group. How could a child be a leader when Endeavor stood next to him?

"They are some unopened appliances in the office building! Maybe we could use them?"

"Before that," Spinner called out, catching up, "I'm sure Iida-kun has informed you, but we found some people."

Deku turned to them. The helmet shined under the embers as it faced them. Takahiro boldly kept his stance in front of the group he was responsible for.

The man in the helmet turned back to the fire.

"Okay, then. It seems you got Deku's approval, " Iida said sternly.

No way, that was approval? And more importantly, this kid was the boss?

Uncaring about the qay they may feel, Iida continued.

"It is a few miles walk from here, but we are currebtly resting at the moment. I am sure that we will be leaving in about ten minutes. If there are any injuries that will inhibit your ability to walk, we will take care of it now." he said, clear and concise with his words. "Likewise, we will try our best to answer any questions you may have, so please be patient with us. We are cleaning out the area."

What had they come in to? He was polite but he spoke so frankly.

"Uh..."

"Could... Could we trouble you for some water?"

Iida nodded, "just a moment." He turned to leave, most likely to get them something to drink. However, a young woman came with a floating keg of water attached to a leash on her hand. In her other hand, some paper cups.

"We will take care of the trash so help yourself," she said, a bright smile on her face.

It was buzzare to see suchyoung and healthy-lookijg children. They didn't look pale and thin, borderlining sickly. They looked like normal teenagers should, if a little more well-toned.

There was a pile of burning bodies behind them but they otherwise looked like a regular scene of young adults helping out where they can.

"T-thank you," some of them managed to stutter out when they got their first cups of cold, clean water in a long while.

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Eventually, the fire died down. They had been sitting to the side for hours as they waited for the... Young leader Deku to be satisfied with.... Whatever it was that they were doing.

In that time, they saw a few other heroes looking no worse for wear. Although the familiar faces associated eith safety was pleasing to see, a dark feeling also welled up within them.

They had suffered. They had witnessed and experoenced a deep amount of suffering. They have all lost loved ones and their homes, one after another. The grief and anguish had splintered their being and twisted them beyond understanding. They were upset and angry.

How could these former heroes look healthy and fine while they had suffered? It was inexcuseable.

"Deku, they checked out what Kouta was talking about. Apparently, there's a lot of shit. Like, we need a truck, there's a lot of shit."

Deku tilted his head to the side, and then made a motion with his hand.

"You got it, bossman. // We are going to break the whole damn thing!" the man in the hood said. He yelled back into the walkie, "Leave it for next time, kiddos!"

It was beyond strange and frustrating.

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"...Kouta," Deku spoke quietly, but his words carried weight. The area fell silent in an instant. "Did you tell them that we would help?"

"J-Just a little," he said, confused on why Dabi groaned into his hand and Aizawa gave a long sigh through his nose. "Did I do something bad?" he asked quietly.

Dabi got to his feet, "Fucking shit. We have to teach them to be distrustful,' he muttered under his breath.

"...It's fine," Deku confirmed. He stood up, clipping the strap of his helmet back into place. "I'll escort them."

"Instead of going back to base first?"

Deku tilted his head.

"Do we need to go to base?"

"Supplies!" Takahiro suddenly blurted out. "We ... We could use some more supplies."

It was pushing it. To make such lofty demands out of people who had a choice in helping them was not his smartest move. However, the person he was talking to was young. He was almost certain that he cluld spin this.

"Please, you wouldn't abandon us to the clutches of those monsters will you? Have some humanity!" he yelled out. Because it wasn't fair.

To him, it wasn't fair that there were people who had clean hair and smelled like detergent. It wasn't fair that they had the protected santuary offered by all these pro-heroes while the rest of them were starving and dying in the streets. It wasn't fair how they had weapons like guns and ammunition on top of quirks and commlinks while they had to share a can of fruit between the group of them.

"We have children with us!" The woman behind him shouted out.

"Yes, mercy! Show some good fate!"

And they were desperate. It was that desperation that drove them out of their previous hiding place. They gritted their teeth and endured the grueling travels to make it to this point.

And next to Deku, the leader of the base, Kouta was beginning to understand the extent of his flippant words.

"Deku, we don't-"

"Alright," Deku said.

An excited murmur scattered through the survivors. Grins broke through as they eyed Deku's companions. No doubt, they were imagining what kind of beautiful life they must live.

"Deku," Dabi spoke up. "You sure?"

The young man didn't respond, and instead walked right past him. The fire-user sighed deeply.

"Guess so," he muttered, rubbing the back of his beck. He eyed the group of stragglers. "Don't fall behind."

### **Return**

"It's not a bad thing," Aizawa said. "Nor is it a good thing. It's an action you did, but it wasn't your fault if it ended good or badly. Some people... Are just desperate."

Kouta clenched his jaw. He didn't know and now that ignorance would be coming for him.

### **New Survivors, Same Problems**

"Augh," Kouta groaned. "I hate adults," he muttered.

"What's up?"

"All they do is complain. They make more work for everyone too. It's so stupid. They act like they're better than everyone, even though they don't do anything."

-

"I don't like you," Eri said bluntly, pointing at Katsuma.

Katsuma's eyes welled up in tears, probably never expecting that meeting another kid his age would end like this. Next to him, his sister geared up to fight right back and Eri shook her head.

"I don't like any of you," she clarified. "Especially not the stupid adults you brought."

Fuyumi, who was trying to run damage-control, frantically tried to get into the middle of it.

"E-Eri-chan," she tried to sound calm and reasonable, "Eri-chan, you can't just say things like that. It could hurt someone's feelings."

"Yeah, but now he knows that I'll never come to save him," she explained frankly. "You can't feel if you're dead."

Fuyumi's eyebrows shot up. "Eri-chan!" she snapped out, and the sudden tone made the young girl flinch back. "That's not something that you should ever say! Okay? You just don't say it!"

The young girl's furrowed back, but kept her mouth closed.

"Now, apologize. That was very mean of you to say."

And Eri, her eyes blazing with a fire that had never been turned to Fuyumi, turned on her heel and ran out.

"Eri!"

-

"...What does it matter what you think?" Kouta asked, his eyes narrowed like he was both confused and irritated. "Why does your opinion matter when you aren't even going to stay?"

## Snow + Faded Memories

### **Deku’s Amnesia Incident (p2) [Dec+ Edition]**

The time Deku forgot everything again, except this time, he remembered more.

### **‘Recovered’ & Out**

### **Awful discoveries (yagi)**

But something was fishy about this. Something about this was wrong. He looked at the reports again, flipping through them this way and that as he tried to rack his brain for an answer.

What was he missing? This wasn’t something that they could afford to miss again. This was already approaching the fourth time there was a monster of some sort on their base. He didn’t get what he could be missing?

“Deku, are you still working?”

He looked up where Sasaki had came in.

“Is there something wrong with the reports?”

The tall man looked to be just a little sweaty, and Deku wondered if the volleyball tournament that they were holding had wrapped up. The young man shrugged back.

“I was just double-checking something.”

“You should take a break every once in a while,” Sasaki immediately scolded. And then he winced when he realized how he probably sounded. “...By that, I mean, would you like to join me for some afternoon tea? Some time away might help clear your mind.”

Green eyes fell back to the lists of reports in front of him and he nodded. He stood up. Maybe some time away would do him some good. Being able to take a step away without the immediate fear that everything will fall apart was a new luxury that he (and everyone else here) was working on. As everyone kept telling him, he needed to set the example.

He needed to take a break.

It was going to be okay. He stood up, ready to follow Sasaki out, probably get sucked into Round Eight of their Volleyball tournament, and bask in the sound of other people laughing. There was a patrol group out in rotation, and he hoped that they’ll swing by the creek down south to give him a report before he headed out too.

At the moment, they had more people than ever able to go out and patrol. They had enough people who were confident enough to volunteer their time to head out. Ranging from children who don’t remember what an ATM was to adults who were terrified of standing next to windows, almost everyone on base were comfortable with joining in one or two laps of patrol during the week.

Even Yagi, who was missing organs at the start of all of this, was finally recovered enough to head out and fight, if only he ever found something to fight. Deku vividly remembered the twisted expression of disappointment on his face when he apologized profusely for never being there when he was needed.

Deku stopped cold in his steps. There was no way. There was no damn way.

He spun back around, ignoring the cries behind him, and he rushed for his notes. There’s no way. There was no fucking way.

His eyes scanned the patrols, not just the ones that occurred during periods of times where monsters were sighted near base, but also the patrols where a specific man joined in. Concerning that they had anything from three to five patrols in a day, across two and a half years, he had to look through over 3,600 reports. It would be easier if he just asked for help-but if he was right, then this would result in something hurtful.

“M-map,” he muttered quietly. This he could ask help for. His head snapped up to Sasaki, “Mirai, I… I need a map of the neighborhood.” He took gestured at the map on the wall, “Could you make me a copy? I need… I need like thirty.”

Sasaki frowned, and Deku couldn’t believe that he had forgotten. This man wanted to go take a much deserved break. He was probably tired from working all day.

“Oh, no, you’re busy, it’s okay, I can-”

“Leave it to me.”

Sasaki rushed out, and Deku trusted him. He returned to his work, eyes scanning and pulling out this and that patrol groups. At this rate, he might need to readjust and change them. Not all of them but enough to change the evidence.

Let this be a work of bad luck. Let this be a work of paranoia. If this was true, yes, Deku and the others here might live a better life, but then Yagi will become some political piece instead of a figure-symbol and Deku couldn’t do that to him. However, the more patrols he looked at, the more his stomach twisted.

Indeed, in all the patrols that Yagi was a part of, there were no signs of monsters. The truly peaceful routes, or at least, so peaceful that they were weirded out by how peaceful it was, were all patrols that Yagi was a part of. Each and every single patrol, spanning years, seasons, and with different and a variety of people-but only Yagi. Deku was almost certain of it, because he had been in a patrol-group of some sort with every single person who has ever gone out, in some way, shape, or form. Even in those patrol groups, the only times they didn’t run into any monsters were few and far in between.

What if he’s wrong? What did it mean?

He hoped that he was wrong. That this was all luck and that his hunch was wrong. He would know for certain when he started to compare patrol groups to each other. If he was wrong, if he was really wrong, then there should be no difference and other patrol groups that encountered monsters should exist in a nearby vicinity of some sort. He would need to trace out when and where the last monster-sightings near the base occurred even when Yagi was here.

But if he was right, and it got out that Yagi was some… some natural defense against monsters, he knew what would happen. Aside from the obvious clamour that people may make about how Yagi should never leave the base and always be nearby, he knew that Yagi would shoulder that burden. Yagi would assume that everything, from the bird-monsters to the earthworm-monster, was something that he could have directly prevented.

And Deku didn’t want Yagi to torture himself any longer.

Sasaki returned, and Deku thanked him for the paper.

“...Is there something I could do to help?”

Deku knew he could trust Sasaki. He knew that the man could keep a secret (he knew about OFA, afterall) and that he was trustworthy to the nth degree. That didn’t mean that he wanted to add to those bags under his eyes. That didn’t mean that he wanted to, not when he knew that this was going to be a pain and a half to sort through.

But he didn’t want Sasaki to carry this burden. It was heavy.

The man looked tired. Unfortunately, Deku was an inherently selfish man.

“...I need all the reports on all patrols. Separate them into date and number of monsters witnessed. All routes need to be on a map. One map per month. Red for daylight. Blue for night.”

Sasaki squinted, and Deku knew, okay. He knew that this just sounded like a waste of labor. He knew that but he still-

“Alright. Since the start.”

Deku nodded. “I’ll start there, can you start from yesterday?”

“Understood. We… We’re going to need more help. I’ll call in some people,” Sasaki said, “You need this information now, don’t you? And… it looks like you aren’t going to tell me why.”

“I want to be certain.”

He looked like, for a moment, he was going to fight back. To Deku’s shock, he nodded. “Alright then.” Sticking his head out the window, he looked up and down. “Good timing, Toyomitsu. Could I ask for a favor?”

...And Deku focused on the task on hand.

-

In four hours, while they were elbows-deep in their work, Deku felt sick to the bone. The more he mapped out, the more that he revisited old logs, the worse he felt. He started from the beginning of all his logs, knowing that it would be important to make sure that it wasn’t too obvious about where he was starting, but it was hard work. It was tedious and annoying.

But it was time for night patrol.

Could he afford to let them figure it out? Wasn’t it better if he stayed here to make certain about it and make sure that no one else knew? His eyes trailed on the paper, the combined effort of about a years’ worth of maps had been compiled. They would finish this tonight, even if it killed him.

He chewed on his bottom lip when he slammed his hand down. The room fell silent.

“...We’ll reconvene tomorrow morning,” he decided on. He needed to hit patrols. And more importantly…

He placed his hand on one of his old planners. There were two places where he kept the extra logs. One was his old planner, that detailed way too much about the world and didn’t filter out his feelings. And another log that he had in a safehouse down the way that was a neater version of his planner.

There were the only two places that described the situation he found Yagi in. When he closed his eyes, he could remember that scene vividly. He had been the only person that had seen it. In the accumulated reports, the number of times he went back to check on that place were minimal to none.

“...We can finish this,” Aizawa said, “No problem.”

Deku shook his head, hands trembling.

“No. I want to be here for it.”

Nirengeki, Nishiya, and Hado were also among the people who were trying to help out. If they had moved to the cafeteria, there would have been more helpers, but Deku had no patience for that. He wanted this done now.

“It’ll be done by the time you come back,” Aizawa said, “Are you sure you don’t want us to finish?”

Deku clenched his jaw. These people were as perspective as they were kind, and as smart as they were observant. He took a deep breath and gave a polite bow.

“Please,” he said.

“Consider it done,” the older man said, returning to the work. “Come back safely.”

“Yes,” Deku nodded, “Good luck.”

And he left.

-

When the night patrol finished, Deku’s steps slowed into a halt.

“...Deku, you good?”

The young man took a deep breath. They had dispatched two monsters. The fire wasn’t big. The night was clear and beautiful, with the first quarter moon hanging above him and a thousand stars. His condition was alright, if a little jittery.

If not now, then when?

He looked around at the patrol group. He needed someone that wasn’t very smart, or at least didn’t care. Just one more person to come with him, who knew how he worked well enough to make their own decisions. Someone that wouldn’t figure it out and was removed from the situation.

“Deku.”

He looked up, where the worried gaze of Usagiyama stared back at him.

“It’s fine,” she told him. “You never waited around for us before.”

Deku stared at her for another moment. Taking a deep breath, he felt his head clear up. The thoughts that muddled his head finally cleared out. What was the most important thing right now? Right now, what was the most important thing to do?

He wanted to protect the people here. He wanted to make sure that these people could live, happily and in relative peace. He wanted that world for them, where they could step into the future together.

What did he need to ensure that?

Deku came to a decision. And led them back to base. He didn’t see it, but Usagiyama rolled her eyes as she followed just a step behind, and he made it back to their apartment complex.

Even if he was wrong, completely and totally wrong, couldn’t someone else come to the same conclusion as him? If they did, what did he need to do to protect-

“Ah, Deku-shounen!”

He looked up, where Yagi waved at them excitedly as they entered the compound.

“Welcome back! I wanted to let you know that they were just about done with what you asked about the maps!”

What was important to him was not important to others. What he considered a worthy of cause to bleed and break for was not the same as another’s.

“Alright,” he said, already running for the Rental Office.

Assuming that he was wrong, there was someone else that would eventually think the same thing as he did. Even if it was false, they would believe it and twist their image of Yagi in their head until he became the crux of the issue. Then, they would live with a false sense of security.

So for the same reason why he didn’t want walls. He didn’t want anyone to ever think that they had to sacrifice their individual freedom in exchange for the security. So he…

He took the maps, ordered by month and colored by time, and he gazed at all of them. In his head, he had already memorized the dates that he needed to check, the months that he needed to be careful of. The data remained consistent to his thoughts. Nothing here proved him wrong. He couldn’t let this stand. This could not be real.

“...Is everything alright?”

He looked up at Hado’s worried glance. He grabbed the maps and stacked them into a neat pile.

The last copy of his information was in a safehouse that he made right before hitting Tokyo. They hadn’t pushed out that far in a long time. It would be the closest they get to Tokyo in a while. He placed his hand on the maps, thinking so hard that he could feel his head heat up.

“...Deku?”

“...I’ll be back in two days,” he told her. He adjusted the clipping on his backpack. He didn’t have time for this. There were plenty of things that he left around for any

“Whoa, wait, what?”

“Deku-shounen, why? What could be so pressing?”

He looked at Yagi for a moment. The older man grabbed him by the shoulders, pulling him to face him, and for a moment, Deku felt like those blue eyes pierced through his visor.

“Come now, is it so pressing that you cannot wait to organize a team for this? Surely, if it’s something that makes you rush, then there’s even more of a reason to take our time with it?”

It was sound logic.

Now that Deku thought about it, he had gotten so damn used to have any fire-user within arm’s width. But this time, things were different. He can’t bring anyone with him. He placed his hand on Yagi’s, and gently pulled it off of him.

“...I’ll be back,” he repeated, “in two days.”

And he took off.

-

In hindsight, it was a shock to think that he would be alone. In the four minutes that it took him to grab a lighter, there was a group of them waiting for him.

“What are you going to do with that pitiful lighter?” Enji asked him, gaze heavy.

“Stand back, old man. It’s a big past your bedtime,” Dabi spoke out, blue eyes narrowing at Enji before he looked to Deku. “So, then, where to?”

Cracking her knuckles, Usagiyama’s eyes shined under the moonlight. “I’ve been looking forward to this for a while,” she purred.

Adjusting the hunting rifle on his back, Tokoyami stepped forward. “I’ll be joining you this time as well-”

“Oops, was almost late,” Hawks interrupted him, dropping down next to Deku. “What do you think? Are we good enough to come with you?”

Deku frowned. “I’ll go alone.”

Hawks laughed back, “No way!” he said. “Do what you want to do, and so will we.”

“It’s not,” he hesitated. What did he need to say for them to listen? Well, if he can’t get them to listen, he can just lose them right? They know their way back home. He can just knock them out and collect them later, right?

If it was to protect someone else, he could hurt someone, right?

### **D**