Deku was going to go to hell.

Holy shit, Deku was going to go to hell.

Was violence excusable because everyone else was going it? Was stealing and looting places okay because he knew that the owner would never return? Thievery, vandalism, breaking-and-entering, property destruction, murder, the list seemed to never end.

He watched blood dry on his bat. From his helmet to his shoes, he was only wearing things he took from other people. Other people that he killed.

Strangely enough, however, he didn’t feel anything anymore. He didn’t know if it was because he was thrown through the wall and his entire body was just tingly, or if it was because it was no longer possible for him to feel. Before, just the thought of his mom had tears prickling in his eyes.

He couldn’t remember how she laughed anymore.

Come to think of it, he couldn’t remember the last time he heard anyone laugh.

As soon as he heard that, he heard a bang. The type of bang when someone kicks a door open with all their strength and it splinters. The type of bang he used when he was hunting something, someone, down. Someone else had entered the two-story corporate office building he had just killed someone in.

Within seconds, a loud laughter rang through the entire building. Deku held his breath, as though someone would be able to hear him breath over that outrageously loud laugh. A laugh sounding like glass scraping on metal echoed throughout the building, and Deku slid behind a shelf. He needed to leave.

Every last cell inside of him was screaming at him to run. He needed to run away right now. People who laughed like that, in this kind of situation, were not people that Deku wanted to meet. If they met, one of them would die.

Deku, who always ended up alive to see another day, did not want to kill anyone.

“Wait, where are you going?!” he heard the call. “Come on! Let’s be friends, what do you say?!”

Without even looking, he could see it. The person, lost in grief or time or everything in between, sauntering in after another. The other person (and Deku could hear the unsteady footsteps, they were definitely limping, probably injured) would be frantically hobbling about because they had something they didn’t want to let go of.

Of course Deku knew.

“What’s the matter?! You’re hurting my feelings, Masahiro!”

He closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

“It’s just you and me!” the voice, frantic and lonely, rang about. “Everyone else is dead! It’s just you and me! I’ll send you and then I will go too! It’s not scary! It won’t be lonely! They’re waiting for us, so let’s go!”

As awful as it might sound, Deku understood where he was coming from. Being alone was hard. Being alone after losing everything and everyone was harder. There was mercy in death. There is fear in solitude. He got it. He knew. He understood.

“I don’t want to!” Masahiro, or who he supposed was Masahiro, shouted back. “Mom… Mom didn’t die so that I would follow her! I have to-I have to keep going! I have to survive!”

It was admirable.

“There you are, Masahiro! Come, let’s go! You and me!”

Pointless since no one heard him, but it was admirable. There was only one ending to these kinds of stories. It was a scene Deku’s seen many times by now. Adjusting his grip on the bat, he took a deep breath.

He didn’t want to kill anyone today, but if he left this as it was, wouldn’t it mean that he killed Masahiro?

Either way, blood was going to be spilled.

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The end of the world came hard and fast. And then, months passed and the things that would normally mark him as a coward and a criminal became the normal and the reason why he was alive.

Deku was not a hero.

Standing over the body, he gave a long sigh. The head of the man splattered out into a mess around him, like a splattered halo on a headless body. It was a gorey, gruesome death, and a familiar scene for Deku, at this point in time. His hands didn’t even shake anymore. See? Not a hero.

A hero who didn’t feel anything when they murdered someone in cold blood wasn’t a hero at all.

“Did you… did you just save me?”

Turning back, he saw Masahiro. A short-haired blond, sprawled backwards with several injuries and a heaving chest.. The most notable one was his bleeding leg. He looked young, like he should be rolling out of bed and running to make it to his seat before homeroom started, not being hunted down in an abandoned building.

He panted hard, the sound punctuated by the small puffs of air appearing right in front of his lips.

Deku pulled his backpack off and tossed it towards the young man, slowly. It landed with a dull thud, a foot from his hands and he motioned at it with his bat.

The words clogged in his head. What should he ask? What did people normally talk about? No matter how hard he searched his memories, he couldn’t get an answer. To greet someone like normal, with a “hey, how are you today?” felt wrong and insensitive. He just brutally murdered someone in front of him.

“Is… Are you saying that I can use this?”

Yes! He was sma

“Are you sure?”

Deku nodded his head. And belatedly, he realized that he could just take his helmet off, and explain it, but something shattered. He whipped around, his grip on the bat unrelenting. Two heartbeats later, he heard it. The stumbling and shuffling over broken glass-something had shambled in.

Well, after killing one or two people, what was a few more? Deku rolled his shoulders. He turned to the other teenager, the wide-eyed desperation in his eyes-

“Don’t leave me alone,” he whispered out, his wish hissed through his teeth.

Leave? If he didn’t want to be alone, he should have died. Living was lonesome.

Turning on his heel, Deku left to eliminate the threats. If he didn’t die, he would come back. If Masahiro didn’t die, then he would live. He could come stay where Deku was, until he found someone real to help ease that loneliness.

In the meantime, Deku had to kill.

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Deku returned to the apartment with the young man. Figuring that he would be fine, he grabbed a key to one of the apartments on the first floor and motioned him in. It took much longer than before, but they didn’t run into anything on the way back. For a guy who was so cold his teeth were chattering, he did well to keep up.

Maybe killing everything he ran into was starting to pay off. The last three months he spent bitterly fighting wasn’t a waste of time and effort. He could only hope that it would mean that the numbers of monsters out there were finite. It gave him a very, very, very small hope.

“This … Is this your place? You’re… You’ve been staying here? Alone?”

He passed the key to him. The blond was pretty smart, so he was certain that he would be able to figure it out from now on. Deku didn’t really want to get attached to someone who was going to leave.

“...Could I stay here too? I was… I was a part of a group but it… It fell apart,” his voice choked up, tears springing to his eyes. “I thought I was going to be all alone. I didn’t know… I didn’t even know what to do. I was...”

No matter his best efforts, he could feel his heart twist and crumple. Still, he couldn’t find anything to say to him. What could he say? “I’m sorry for your loss,” “That blows,” or even “my deepest condolences,” sounded wrong. None of them could be the right answer, so instead, Deku pushed the door open a little wider, and watched Masahiro hobble in.

“...I didn’t know what else to do,” Masahiro continued, “I’m … I’m really glad that you were here. I just… I don’t… I will never forget this. Thank you.”

The words made the guilt in his heart create widening craters. There was nothing to thank Deku for, since he wasn’t a good person. He just killed people, and it worked out in this guy’s favor. It wasn’t something that should be thanked. It wasn’t something that should make him feel gratitude.

When Masahiro got into the room, he turned on a light in the kitchen (it was fucking dark with this stupid helmet on his head)-

“You guys have electricity here?”

-and he put some hot tea on.

There wasn’t a lot of food, but it was all going to go bad if someone didn’t eat it. He’d let Masahiro have what was stashed here, and he would return to his own apartment later to do the same. The young man probably wanted some time to himself, to mourn what he lost and think about what he wanted to do. Whatever it was. However long he needed it. Or at least until Deku died. But until he died, Deku would have this for him, because it was something he didn’t get to have. No need to put someone through anymore needless suffering than they needed to.

However, Deku really couldn’t do anything else for Masahiro. He needed to stand up on his own, since he would probably die alone.

And when Masahiro stopped looking at him like that, like all the lights in the world would blow out like a candle if Deku walked too fast, he would leave just like the others. And Deku would never see him again.

There was no need to get attached. It would just make it harder on both of them. Masahiro was probably sick of losing things.

Deku was.

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With his guest situated, Deku headed back out.

At the place where he killed the man, there were no bodies anymore. Looking around the room, he could see all the bloodstains among the broken drywall and shattered glass. Overturned furniture and doors ripped off their hinges laid about, but drawers and closets were still closed. Deku pried a few open, just to be certain, and indeed, several first-aid supplies were still inside, untouched.

This turned out to be a bigger problem.

If he said that he wanted to burn the bodies so that they wouldn’t be desecrated and that their bodies would return to the earth would be retired. However, in reality, he wanted to burn the bodies so that nothing would try to eat it and get stronger. Trial and error taught him that one.

The blood was smeared out. He could figure where it was taken. From the fact that the supplies weren’t taken, he could figure out what took the bodies.

With the moon as his witness, Deku headed out for another hunt. A few hours later, the sunrise would be obscured by thick plumes of smoke as he burned all the corpses that he made.

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Masahiro had vigor and energy.

Deku didn’t know how badly he was injured, but he was glad to see that the blond was healing up well enough that he was out and about like so. Deku wasn’t nearly as strong as that. Since he was in and out at odd hours, and he didn’t want to expose Masahiro to additional trauma, he had been dropping off whatever extra supplies Deku had but didn’t need. Some more first-aid stuff, some dried fruits, and a few cans of spam.

It would be years before Deku really made a dent in the surplus of supplies he hoarded over the months. No harm in sharing. For all he knew, he wouldn’t even be here next year, so all the supplies would go to waste.

He had been meaning to take some time to just sit and talk, properly introduce himself to Masahiro, but he always chickened out. What if he said the wrong thing? He didn’t want to look like a stammering idiot to the first person he’s met in weeks.

When he crafted the perfect introduction, that’s when he would go and talk to Masahiro. If the blond needed him, he was certain that they would talk then. For now, he would drop off the extra blankets that he had and be on his way.

Winter was frigid cold, after all.

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Two days after Masahiro began to occupy apartment 1008, Deku found a batch of survivors, surrounded and injured at the end of a street. From the way that they were barely conscious and still struggling, he was certain that they weren't infected.

From the way that they were still standing, wary and tense, he deduced that they wanted to live.

He thought it was strange that he hadn’t seen any Walkers even though he was branching out of the residential area. His suspicions were confirmed when he saw a horde of them shuffling to the group of survivors. On the ground, there seemed to be some corpses, but the number left to kill was staggering still.

They weren’t particularly loud, but in the silence of this ghost town, even talking would echo.

He didn’t really know what possessed him to go running at them. There was probably no way for all of them to survive, and in all honesty, some of them even looked just about ready to die. They were all in various stages of injury, but it was clear that they were unable to fight the oncoming horde. Their backs were to the wall, literally and figuratively, and several of them seemed to be bleeding out.

“Oh shit! Oh, shit! Guys, guys I think we’re going to die. // This is the best day ever!” the blond man yelled, his hands coming up to his head as he twisted this way and that.

All of them were otherwise in t-shirts and jeans. No bags or weapons near them. It was clear to Deku at the sight of them that they must have all come from the same place. If they weren’t infected with those injuries, he’s certain that it means that someone else inflicted those injuries on them.

Someone else must have left them for dead here.

Cold as it may be, it was smart. Use bait and leave safely. It was also a great way to get rid of unpleasant people while simultaneously using it to keep the rest in line. It made sense in Deku’s head. If he was in their position, he would have made the same decision.

The Greater Good, and all that.

When he was finally close enough to make a difference, he took a quick stock of the situation. There were a group of 15 of them, with three tottering in from down the street.

Not the best odds, but Deku worked with worse.

“Shut up, Twice-”

But, his eyes were drawn to one of the men in particular.

He had ashen-blue hair, and piercing red eyes. He looked like it was taking everything he had to lift his head. He didn’t look like he wanted to die. In fact, it looked like he would fight death itself, if it dared to come. Black blood dripped from his mouth to the ground, signalling to Deku how long they’ve been out here.

Looking at him, he’s reminded of someone familiar.

He didn't hesitate after that, and pulled the lever of his fire extinguisher. He took aim and fired. When the resulting white foam froze the first two and the others closest to them, he pulled his bat and swung. He thought that he’d gotten stronger, because their skulls shattered within a single swing now. He didn’t feel as tired either.

The remaining half turned around, moaning and groaning, but as a group, they slowed down. If they were attracted to potential victims based on proximity, Deku was certain that they would be targeting him.

They proved him correct.

He jumped back, but messed up his landing. His foot caught on the flesh of a fallen body and he stumbled. He managed to roll with grace, but when he got back onto his feet, something draped over his back. Eager, rotting hands clawed at his helmet and shirt. Adjusting his feet, he leaned forward. It toppled over his shoulder and he didn't waste any time grabbing it’s chin and jerking it sharply to the left.

A high pitch keen left it before it stopped making any sound at all. Deku kept his focus though, because he needed to keep himself together. If not, they would all die. He lifted his arm up just in time, and the Walker closest opened its mouth to clamp down on his forearm. The padding and his thick layers of duct tape kept him safe from tearing his flesh apart, and he shoved it backwards.

He wasn’t about to make the same mistakes.

Two on his left and three on his right approached him. He didn’t even realize that he was surrounded until it was too late. He adjusted his grip on the bat, to bring the tip of the bat right onto the eye socket, crunching the bone without further ado. He jerked to the left, swinging his bat, and managed to knock one into the other. The resulting collison knocked them down, so Deku jumped up to gain some extra force behind his next swing.

One head collided against his swing, it crashed into the head next to it, and experience told him that it would be enough. He turned over his shoulder for the next three. Behind them, closer to the group of people he was trying to protect, probably fixated on the easy prey.

No, no.

He turned around and with a mighty effort, threw his bat and knocked one of them over. He balled his hands into fists and ran. At first, he wanted to get his bat, but one of them turned around to lunge at him. He dropped to his back, lifted his feet to rest against its chest, and grabbed its chin when it came down with its mouth open. Blood and saliva came dripping onto his helmet and with some more effort, he snapped its neck. He shoved it off to the side and rolled over the other way. Jumping backwards, he grabbed his bat and got up to his feet.

He surged forwards, his strength returning by the tenfold because there was someone behind him. He couldn’t afford to fall now. If he fell, the people behind him would be caught. They would all die. Pitifully and terribly, like the once-people trying to eat him now.

He thought that they said something, but he didn’t focus on anything except the remaining ones staggering in front of him. He took a deep breath and dived in.

-

With every last one of them dispatched, Deku swung his bat hard in an attempt to get off the loose and wet drops of blood off of it. He turned over his shoulder, where the assorted group of individuals stared back at him in varying amounts of surprise.

He took a step towards them, and the lizard man lifted his hands up, “Stay back!”

He stopped at that, and realizing how intimidating he must look covered in blood, dropped the bat and lifted his hands up to show that they were empty. His gloves were taped down with duct tape, and suddenly realized that he was covered in blood. His bat did very little to protect him from the ensuing gorefest that spread around, and remembering how many of them puked blood all over him, he understood why they didn’t want him close. He probably smelled too.

He eyed the people huddled against the wall. It looked like they had some open wounds. More importantly, they were poorly dressed for the season and clearly had nothing on their person. He had thought it before, but it was even more obvious now. It was just them and the clothes on their back.

There was no way in hell they would have been traveling, in a group as big as this, for long enough that Deku found them alive like this. Someone did this to them.

The ashen-hair man with eyes like fire had dropped his head against the ground, and both of the women weren’t doing any better. Both of the masked men were passed out against the ground, and the lizard-man panted hard as he kept his hands against his side. The last one was a tall man, with sharp blue eyes and painful looking parts of skin stitched together to form his face.

“...There’s nothing for you to take,” he said quietly, and a small smirk curled onto his face. Despite how close he lingered to death, he looked too smug to look like a loser. “Too bad for you. We have no supplies or weapons. You just wasted your time.”

If he was a hero, Deku would be able to save them with a big smile. He would laugh their aches away, carry them back to a safe and secure base where they could spend their days in relative peace. Just ten months ago, he would have seen this as a chance to be more like the dazzling people he strived to be like.

But Deku wasn’t a hero.

Nothing made that more obvious than these last few months that he had been surviving through. Try all he might, he doubted that he, or anyone that wasn’t a real doctor with infinite resources, could save the people by his side.

But, he could do something for them that no one else could. He could do something that he never got to do for all the other people he had to watch die and rot away.

He could let them die like people.

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Deku suddenly realized that he was way in over his head once he realized that he had to carry all of these guys back, possibly one at a time, to his base a place a mile away. While he was certain that there was more than enough supplies to house all of them, and there would be minimal Walkers between here and his home, he looked down and wonders how the fuck he’s supposed to prioritize some over others.

He’s not a doctor.

Fuck, when he broke something four months ago, he literally duct taped it and has been walking on it since. He had, of course, enough experience with his own body to know the basic dos-and-don’ts of human first-aid but...

But one of them was bleeding from her eye.

He stared at them for another moment, taking a deep breath, and pulled his backpack off. He unstrapped his fire hydrant and placed it next to him.

First thing was first. He needed to stop the bleeding. He left the area with a bat, dispatching others as he saw them and leaving a corpse, just the corpse, on the ground. He’ll come back for them at a later time. The living mattered more right now.

He returned, after ransaking an office just a few doors down. He took all their medicine and first-aid, glad that this office was relatively untouched, and came running back. He ran for a custodial closet, breaking the doorknob with his bat, and getting the paper towels.

It wasn’t as clean as he would hope, but he had bigger things to worry about right now. As it was, either they die here or get infected and die anyways. Right now, he just wanted to try.

Next, he took his bat and broke off wooden sticks off of chair stools, and desks. The sound brought forward another four Walkers, and Deku dispatched them with a lot more mess than he had hoped. He took a deep breath, trying to calm his racing heart. He couldn’t afford to be caked in more blood now. However, whatever he didn’t kill would come back with him to the survivors. And so, killing them was a priority. Grabbing the supplies he came hunting for, he returned to that alleyway with a little more blood on his person.

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When he returned with some more supplies, he felt his strength return to him by tenfold. They were still there just as he left them. There was someone waiting for him, there were people who were waiting to be saved, and he didn’t think he could handle disappointing another person ever again. There was only one that was conscious, so he put a bottle of pain relievers and a bottle of water right in front of him via the paper towels and moved to grab the others.

He all but tore off his outer gloves, thankful that he got into a habit of wearing gloves underneath the pair he was wearing right now. It started as something he did because his hands were too small to fit into adults’ pair without it slipping off, and additionally so that he could have a bloody pair to fight with and a clean pair to gather supplies with minimal discomfort. Bless paranoia, because it might just make the difference between a regular dead corpse and a reanimated corpse right now.

He grabbed all of them and flipped them onto their backs. Since they were in white t-shirts, it was easy to see where the bleeding injuries were so he started there. For the most part, it looked like they all underwent severe trauma to their body, but the bleeding was minimal. Good. That meant that he didn’t have to worry as much about them getting infected right now.

They must have passed out from exhaustion and pain, a rampant fever taking over their features. From their sunken cheeks, dark bags, and pale skin, it was clear that they were on their last leg when they happened to stumble into Deku’s hunting grounds. Whether or not this was lucky for them was something none of them would know until weeks later.

If they had weeks.

He grabbed some face masks and promptly covered their mouths. The ones who had arms or legs twisted in ways that limbs shouldn’t be twisted were snapped back and given a makeshift split from the office desks and chairs that he broke before he came back.

It wasn’t much, but he did find some fire blankets, and deftly wrapped up the one that looked the worst. The one that brought him here to begin with. The thin man with ashen-blue hair. He grabbed his backpack and opened it up to get some more duct tape out. He taped down the sides of the blanket around him, so that he looked like a well-cocooned caterpillar, and hefted him up to his shoulders.

For a guy who was probably starving, he was heavy. Deku had no doubts that he could get him back, but he eyed his backpack warily. He would have to abandon it. He had the stranger over his shoulder, and when the man groaned, a little, was a little glad that he was still alive, even if he was probably in a comprehensible amount of pain.

Okay, time to do the next step. Getting them back to the apartment.

“...Why?”

He turned over to the lizard man. He stared at him, jaw slack, as he trembled. His eyes watered, looking from the supplies scattered about, including the juice box and aspirin in front of him from where Deku handed it over.

“Why… are you…?”

If Deku was a hero, he would have said something amazingly inspirational. If Deku had a strong heart and believed that he could save all of them, he would have laughed brightly and vibrantly.

But he wasn’t a hero.

He was barely 14 and there was a man on his shoulder who was more dead than alive. He had been alone and out of practice with speaking to another human being for the better part of a year. Understanding that it would take too long to formulate a response, he turned away and left instead.

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The lizard man looked just as lost when he came back. He racked his head for the right words, but he still came up blank.

Deku didn’t think too hard about it. There were still five other people he needed to get out first. Hopefully, the drugs would kick in and he wouldn’t have to carry the lizard man. It would be exhausting, especially since he knew that he would have to stay up all night to make sure that none of them turned. Not carrying one person would make a huge difference.

This time, he grabbed the girl with the missing eye, and was glad that she was lighter. He thought really hard about it, especially when he felt his legs buckle under the stress of another body, and ultimately decided to take her last. He placed her back down and grabbed the tallest woman next. He was going to need all his strength for this one, so it was better to do it first.

Then came the longest man who didn't have an arm. It was hard to balance, and the man spoke incoherently. Then the blond man with the scar down his face. Then the one with stitches.

He grabbed the blond girl who looked the smallest last, and standing up carrying her like he did everything else, shot his backpack a mournful glance.

He didn’t have a lot of sunlight left. Probably, before he even made it back to the apartment complex, he wouldn’t have any light left. He stared at his backpack and wondered if he should just take it. No, lives come first. He turned to the lizard man on the other side, who was still sitting in shock as he stared at him.

Was… Was he alive? Did this count as being alive?

He stared at him and extended his hand out to him. Lizardman’s lost eyes suddenly focused onto his hand. And with a beckoning motion, stood up with the girl draped over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes. Deku waited and the lizard man began to stand up.

He hissed immediately, his hand coming to his side, and Deku felt so dumb.

He walked over and kneeled next to him. He grabbed the lizard’s arm and pulled it over his shoulder and wrapped his arm around the middle of his torso, hauled him up to his feet. Since the lizardman was, like everyone that he found that day, much taller than him, it was insanely easy for the lizard to use him as a crutch.

“I… I-” the man stuttered out, “I don’t… I don’t understand…?”

Deku wished he had words to give him. A thousand possible things crossed his mind, but not one of them made it past his lips. He thought, for a second, that he had forgotten how to speak. They walked slowly, much slower than Deku wanted, and it turned into night before they got to the apartment complex. It was truly lucky that there was a full moon tonight, or they would be fumbling through the dark.

Luckily, there weren’t any ambushes.

He led the lizard to the staircase and slowly helped him and the young girl up the stairs. His legs were trembling, but if he falls, all three of them would go crashing down. Right now, they needed a good, strong support. He can’t tell them that everything was going to be okay, but he can do this.

If they die tonight, they die knowing that someone cared.

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As someone plagued by nightmares, Deku rarely slept. In that sense, he was glad for the sudden influx of things to do. In the next few weeks, almost everyone had recovered enough to walk and mingle about on the base.

And more than glad, he was incredibly thankful that the people that he pulled in these last few days were filled with life and vigor.

“You’re really quiet, huh?” Toga, the girl with a missing eye, said. Her smile was bright, as though she had never experienced pain before, and Deku felt his heart ache at the sight of it. “You know, most people would take this time to demand things from us. Like I saved you so you owe me your life!’ kind of deal, you know?”

No, he had no idea. Deku didn’t really think that he saved anyone, moreless think that he could dare demand something like that from anyone.

“...Still nothing, huh? Are you shy? Is it because you’re ugly? It’s okay, I don’t mind. I’m just curious what the person who saved me looked like.”

But, if he had one complaint, it would be how they had attached themselves to him.

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