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I frowned at the question, Momo’s father staring frostily at me. “Um, my intention is to be a good friend?” I answered, unsure. “She *has* mentioned me, right?”

“She has, *briefly*,” the elder Yaoyorozu admitted, as if her daughter’s not saying more was somehow *my* fault. “Though she spoke a great deal more about Ms. Ashido.”

I waited, but nothing more was said. I shrugged, “Makes sense, Momo’s more Mina’s friend than mine. So. . . is that all you wanted to know?”

The look of stern paternal disapproval might’ve cowed me if I was *actually* Denki, but I knew enough about people, and about myself, that *all* it did was point out the sheer ham-fistedness of the intimidation tactic. My first instinct was to yawn, or get up and leave since he was refusing to answer my question, throwing his lack of respect or politeness back in his face, but this man *was* Momo’s dad, so I curbed my first instinct, and just stared back, unimpressed by the attempt. The staff at UA had earned my respect, and this world of heroes *did* seem much lighter than where I’d come from before, but this entire ‘I’m gonna be mad at you because I’m assuming bad things about you’ BS was something I was *well* acquainted with back home, and was thus something that I had *very* little patience for.

Time ticked on, and I glanced again to the thin middle-aged man standing behind and to the side of the industrialist, who met my gaze blankly, not giving anything away. The second I opened my mouth to speak Mr. Yaoyorozu tried to cut me off, but I talked over his, “And your actions at the medal ceremony?” with my own, “So. . . is that a yes?”

*And my patience is gone.* Looking at the man, who was now *glaring* at me, we’d just hit strike three and he’d burned through any good will being related to my friend gave him. “Sir, were you *really* waiting for me to speak before interrupting me? I suppose Momo must’ve learned her manners from her *mother,*” I remarked, in a tone that expressed how disappointed *I* was with the man, and how little his own implied disapproval meant to me.

Cost-benefit analysis of this entire situation made the choice to not put up with this easy. Momo was *really* that nice and polite, not pretending, but also *not an idiot,* so her father telling her not to involve herself with me would have the *opposite* effect, *especially* as the *first* thing she’d do would be to find out *what actually happened.*

The other man glared at me, while I just sat back in the chair and waited. Would he demand I get out of his house? Would he tell me to stay away from his daughter? We never even *saw* her parents in the show, so were they actually secretly evil and corrupt, and here’s where he’d threaten me and my family? I waited, expecting one of about a half dozen things, most of them *not good,* the best merely *neutral*.

What I *wasn’t* expecting was for the man to *smile.*

His demeanor changed in an instant, as he leaned back in his own chair, commenting, “Good.”

My eye twitched as, wondering what the hell was going on, I asked, *“Sir?”*

“My daughter is exceptional,” he stated, not boasting as much stating a known fact, like ice was cold or water was wet. “She doesn’t need someone weak, even as a friend.” At my look of incredulity, he added, “Too often, one can see one’s own strength reflected in others.”

“I, um, so this was a test?” I asked. “To see if I’d meekly fold because you didn’t like me?”

“Or if you would lose your temper,” he noted. “Your insult was not terribly subtle, but enough for one your age.”

I gave the other man a measuring look. “Mina didn’t mention anything like this,” I remarked, not exactly calling out the hole in his statement, merely highlighting it.

However, the other man laughed, “My wife’s Quirk allows her to be a great deal more subtle, and Ms. Ashido is less reserved. My daughter also provided more information, while she has been suspiciously tight-lipped about you, Mr. Kaminari. Do you suppose you know why?”

“As I said, she’s more Mina’s friend than mine,” I reiterated. “And Momo and I are friends, nothing more.”

The other man said nothing for a moment, but without the oppressive air he’d had before, now more as if he was selecting his words for maximum precision. “You may be now, but those things can change. Your gender presents certain possibilities that were not present with Ms. Ashido,” he finally remarked.

*Jokes on you,* I thought, but kept my expression incredulous. “So, what next, a shovel speech?”

“Shovel. . .” the other man echoed, not understanding what I meant.

“If I do anything to hurt her, you’ll ‘insert violence here’,” I explained, getting a laugh from the other man.

“Nothing so crude,” he said, waving me off. “No, my wife and I knew there would be some who sought her for her wealth, even in a school such as UA. You disagree?” he asked, reading my facial expression as I tried to think who that would apply to.

“Honestly, there isn’t, at least in class 1-A,” thinking of the normal hangers-on that tended to show up in high-school settings, especially around rich girls. “Maybe because we’re freshman? No. . . that shouldn’t matter that much.” I shrugged. “As far as I’m aware, when it comes to your wealth, no one cares.”

The skeptical look was expected. “And the thought of never having to work a day in your life? A great deal would desire that,” the industrialist noted, and I couldn’t help but snort. “Something funny?” he asked, a single eyebrow raised.

“No, only that I think I just figured out *why*,” I replied. “Sir, if someone got into the Hero Course, a life of luxury on someone *else’s* dollar *isn’t what they want.* Hell, the one girl in our class who’s express goal is to make money as a Pro Hero *wouldn’t* want to get it that way, she’d want to make it *herself,* to help support her family. If our class had one collective sin, it would certainly be *pride*, but I think that’s probably true of most Pro Heroes.”

“Self-selecting then?” He considered, nodding. “But there are more students at UA than those training to be heroes.”

“And we almost *never talk*,” I replied. “I’ve got a friend in the Support Course, Mei, you saw us working together during the festival, but you only need to see the reactions of the *other* students, both in my class *and* hers, to see how unusual that was.”

The industrialist didn’t respond to that, asking me instead, “And *your* sin is Pride?”

I wanted to say yes, but I had to consider it. Telling him it was *Lust* probably wasn’t the best idea, though given the situation I was in, and my relationship with Mina, I could make an argument for it. Envy, Sloth, Gluttony, and Wrath weren’t really my thing, but Greed. . . no, it wasn’t having things for the sake of *having things* I wanted, it was having things to protect and support myself and those I cared about. “If it wasn’t Pride, I would’ve given up when Midoriya uppercut me *out of the stadium*,” I finally remarked, getting a reserved smile from the other man. “And as for money, sir, I’m never going to need for that.”

“Really?” he asked incredulously.

*“Really,”* I agreed. “Sir, I have the same power as my father, *and then some.* I could get the same kind of high-paying job he has in the government sector if I wanted, but, well, I’m a power-type as well as transformational, not ugly, *and* smart enough to create Support Items.”

“I’m not familiar with the construction of those, only that there’s no profit mass production,” the man noted with curiosity. “My wife handles R&D, while I handle logistics.”

I nodded. Once I understood what Support Items really were myself I had to look up why, when industrial-scale 3D printing was easy, and miniaturized power sources and energy weapons weren’t that hard to make, everything looked so *normal*.

The answer was as simple as it was unexpected: *that’s what people wanted.*

After the emergence of superpowers, and the century and change of chaos and destruction that followed, things worldwide took a *hard* right turn, politically speaking. Not in the religious sense, though there was a good deal of that as well, no, the laws of practically every nation became very, *very* conservative, restricting things that’d further destabilize and change society from what it once was, after even the first bits of stability started to emerge from power-induced anarchy. *That* was why, despite a flying car not being that much more difficult to build than a normal one, they were rare in the extreme. Heroes and the like could get special dispensation from the government, their applications fast-tracked, but most people couldn’t, and there was enough social pressure that the rich had to at least pretend to play along, preventing obvious technological indicators to exacerbate the class divides between the haves and have-nots.

However, all that being true, *incremental* changes were allowed, and had already improved things greatly. The ratio of what would be ‘middle class’ to ‘poor’ had thus shifted greatly from what it used to be pre-destabilization. The poor still existed, they *always* would while people had the freedom to make bad decisions, but with every country having a stockpile of hyper-tech weapons, their attack methodology varied in the extreme, to the point that no one could create a total defense, international war was something that just *didn’t happen*. Well, except for one place, but the Middle-East was something that *no one talked about*, and for good reason. Early on some of the other countries had tried to get involved, but when one person with a hyper-specific but deadly quirk could attack and kill in an instant, most nations had backed off, many almost becoming isolationist, at least culturally. Then there was the can of worms that was the extra-national, and oddly named, I-Island.

There was, however, a niche that was, while not *un*filled, still was somewhat open. Those that could create Support Items wanted to make big and flashy devices, like Mei, and Support Companies catered to them, but by offering small, *non*-paradigm-shifting increases in technology, a good amount of profit could be made without having to but heads with conservative politicians.

“The high-powered prototypes, or even Hero-spec items my partner makes aren’t, but, if you know what you’re doing, you can scale them down, the restrictions aren’t nearly as strict,” I offered. “Interested?”

“I would be lying if I said I wasn’t. If I said no?” he questioned in turn.

“Then I’ll find someone else,” I replied easily. “I’ve got time, and if it takes until I go pro, well, when I break into the top hundred, I’ll probably have people coming to *me.*”

Momo’s father looked doubtful, “You think you will rank that high?”

I snorted, “Give me a decade, and I’ll be in the top *ten*.” *Assuming I’m still in this dimension,* I added internally, *we’re not invaded by aliens, or society just doesn’t disintegrate*. “Likely along with Midoriya, Momo, and Mina.” Momo’s Quirk, with some Support Items creatable on demand, would be *insane,* Mina would have all the defenses that I possessed, and Midoriya was *Midoriya*.

“Pride is certainly your sin,” the other man remarked with a smile. “My daughter mentioned you helped her develop her Quirk?”

I nodded. “Midoriya’s better at it than I am, but I’m half-descent at figuring out new power uses. And, well, after the USJ, I didn’t feel comfortable sitting around and waiting to be taught. I’d rather my friends be safe, even if I’m not there to help, and that means training.”

Mr. Yaoyorozu’s expression soured, and I wondered if I’d said something wrong. “Yes. *That.* I must thank you for protecting my litt-, my daughter during that. . . *event*.”

“Um, you’re welcome?” I replied, unsure, getting a questioning look in return. “She’s my friend, sir, and even if she wouldn’t, protecting people is what heroes *do*.”

He nodded in understanding, shifting topics once more. “You mentioned seeking to place in the top ten. What if my daughter places higher than you?”

“Um,” I repeated, “Good for her? I’m sorry, I don’t understand what you’re really asking, sir.”

He was quiet for a moment, before stating, “I thought you said your sin was Pride. Wouldn’t having someone, especially someone less powerful than you, above you be unfair? Be wrong?”

“Oh, uh, okay, *no,*” I shook my head, “For two reasons. First of all, Momo *isn’t* weaker than me.” At the man’s skeptical look I quickly explained, “In the ‘can I lift a car in a second’, sense, yeah, I objectively *am* more powerful, but in general capabilities,” *with the powers that I’m publicly displaying, “*we’re either matched, or *she* beats *me*. I’m limited to superstrength and electrocuting things, and whatever tech I have on hand. She can do *far* more.”

“And the second?” the man asked, smiling for some reason.

“Well, I’m helping her get stronger by training with her, just as she’s helping me get better by training with me. If she ranks higher than I do, it’ll be, at least in some small part, *because of me*,” I explained, vaguely remember there being a Yiddish term for that exact concept, though I couldn’t remember what it was. “So her victories are, in part, mine, just as mine are, in part, hers,” I said, opening my arms in a ‘obviously’ gesture. “Either way, something to be *proud* of.”

The other man regarded me, before shaking his head. “You certainly are an *unusual* young man. Miotosu, please show him out.”

The man behind Momo’s father, what I had to assume was a bodyguard, stepped forward, and the slight pressure on Defenses faded. “Sir,” the man said, his voice soft but firm. “Mr. Kaminari saw me as soon as he entered.”

As the elder Yaoyorozu’s looked at me in surprise, I asked, “Is that unusual.=? He was standing *right there*.”

The bodyguard replied, “My quirk, **Blend**, makes me difficult to notice. More if I push it, and if I do not look out of place. You should not have been able to notice me.”

“Oh, *that*,” I said, with a bit of a smile, both men’s attention now firmly on me. “I’m immune to mind-affecting Quirks. If I had to guess, my neurons are hardened to handle my electricity, like hardened electronics, but that makes them harder to mess with.” That *wasn’t* what was going on, but if I had to guess, that would’ve been it. “Like I said, *top ten*.”

“I see,” was Mr. Yaoyorozu’s only response.

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Returning, no one made comment on my absence, and it was after nightfall that we finished up. Toru, Jiro, and Asui had made their decisions fairly quickly, and they helped us sort through the others, our decisions finally made and all of us piling into the limo to take us to the nearest train station at nine at night. The normal worry some might have about teenagers coming home after dark was counterbalanced by the fact that we had all, a week ago, shown the world *just* how dangerous we were.

The next day, meeting up with Mina right before class started, but *after* helping Mei rework the new designs for my armor, I told my girlfriend about my conversation with Mr. Yaoyorozu. The pinkette laughed herself silly when I shared that the reason *she* didn’t get interrogated was that *obviously* there could be nothing other than friendship going on there, so why worry?

“Given that *you* were the one that asked *me* about it, I think he might be off base there,” I remarked, nodding to Jiro as she walked into class. The girl hesitated, nodding back to me before trying to talk to Bakugo, with limited success.

Classes rolled on, the weekend coming all too soon. Saturday was spent with Mina, our normal Karaoke *very* enjoyable. During a break between songs, I finally asked, “You think I could pick up Hawk’s Quirk?”

The girl shrugged, “You picked *mine* up. How’s that workin’ anyways? You only use it when we’re, *you know.*”

“Dancing horizontally?” I asked, getting an eye roll and a laugh from my lover. “Not much. I think it’s gotten a bit better, but I haven’t trained it *at all*, like I have with my father’s.”

“Your father’s. . . . *oooooh,”* she said, eyes going wide. “Like, *duh*. You only started getting’ all *this* right before school, so you were gettin’. . . how did I *miss* that!?”

Now it was my turn to roll my eyes. “Because getting an offshoot of a parent’s power happens, and *this,”* I gestured between us with the Stamp I called to my hand in an instant, “doesn’t. So, Hawks?”

“It’s like Midoriya said,” she commented with a wave of a pink hand. “His power isn’t havin’ a different body like Tsu or Jiro, it’s makin’ stuff, which you already do with mine. What’re ya gonna do if they’re *just* like his. Like, the same color and everythin’?”

“Keep them under my armor,” I replied easily, tossing the Stamp into the trash. “Let them move my body without being obvious. No feather-swords for me, but do I really need them?”

Mina laughed and pulled my head down, kissing me deeply, and I return the motion, losing what I was saying as I enjoy us just being together.

“Nope!” she smiles, and then turns to the screen. “Now it’s my turn to pick!”

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And then it was Monday, and time for the first day of our internships. After Homeroom, we’d been issued our costumes, my double-sized suitcase getting a few looks from the others. “Dude, why is your’s so big?” Kirishima demanded.

Jiro tried not to laugh, while my girlfriend shot me a big grin and nodded, mouthing ‘That’s what I said.’ I just sighed. “*Phrasing*, man. And I’ve been adding to it. Some after USJ, and a bit more last week.” What Mei had done to my gloves was both amazing, but also showed me *just* how much farther I had to go before I was *anywhere* close to her level. “Only reason *Mina’s* isn’t bigger than mine is that Power Loader is still going over the design with a fine-tooth comb.” Apparently, the design that we, and by we I mean Mei, had come up with was close enough to qualify as low-level power armor, which required a *host* of checks before being okay’d for use.

He’d made us watch a video when Mei had complained. Without healing Quirks, that man’s spine would’ve never been *re-attached*, and it was only possible because of how clean a break it’d been.

In the now, a quick bus-ride took us to the train station, where we gathered together, Eraserhead looking us all over with tired annoyance, as civilians cast interested glances our way. “Everyone has their costumes, right?” he asked, despite seeing us all carry our suitcases on and off the bus. “Remember, you don’t have permission to wear them out in public yet. And don’t *lose* them or anything,” he added as a worried afterthought. Considering some of the Support Items integrated into them, that *could* be bad.

*“Gotchya!”* My girlfriend cheered, hefting her suitcase.

“*Speak properly!*” the teacher chided. “It’s ‘yes sir’, Ashido.”

“Yes sir,” she sighed, and I patted her on the back comfortingly.

“Make sure you mind your manners with the other heroes during your internships,” he commanded. “Now get to it.”

“*Yes sir,”* the class chanted in response, as they turned to head for their various platforms.

However, I held back, motioning for Mina to keep going. Our agencies were both in the same direction from UA, so we’d get to be together for a bit longer. “Don’t you have a train to catch?” Eraserhead asked.

“Sir, about what we talked about before. About Ida,” I said in return.

Struggling with the ‘do I say something or do I not’ dilemma, I’d finally asked Mina about it, in hypotheticals. About the pros of helping, versus possibly being believed to have connections or information that I *didn’t* have in the future, or being put on the radar of people I wanted to avoid. She hadn’t asked me about it directly, and I *would’ve* told her the truth, but she’d let me keep it in ‘what if’s’.

As was becoming the pattern, she’d taken the gordian knot of issues and worries, and melted them down to their component parts. The way she’d put it I could approach the ‘authority figure’, not because I *knew* the ‘troubled youth’ would *absolutely* go after the ‘six-fingered man’ who hurt his ‘mentor’ if I didn’t change things, but because I was worried about what the ‘troubled youth’ *might* do, and how he, unlikely as it could be, might actually find the person he was looking for. The was she’d explained it, between eyerolls and kisses, was just because I *wanted* to help didn’t mean that I had to be *completely* honest, just point the right people in the right direction.

And so I’d emailed Aizawa, and met him at school on Sunday, and talked about my fears with Ida, asking if he’d applied to internships at the sight of Stain attacks, *especially* Hosu, where the last one happened. My teacher had told me he couldn’t discuss the specifics of other student’s decisions, but thanked me for coming to him. Now I looked at the man expectantly.

“What I’ve said hasn’t changed. Discussing the personal choices of other students is not my job. If you want to know, you could ask him,” the Pro told me.

“I did,” I told him, having asked everyone on the bus ride over, Ida still going with Manual, spouting some tribe about learning from a hero who had ‘cultivated a most exceptional connection with his community’. “He’s *going* to Hosu. *That’s* not what I’m asking about,” I challenged, staring at the man. With Midoriya no longer with Gran Torino, this was shaping up to be another Ojiro situation, only much, *much* worse.

Aizawa sighed, looking off to the side. “*I don’t remember kids being this pushy,*” he muttered, before looking back at me. “If I say nothing, what will you do?”

I’d talked about this with Mina too. I *wanted* to trust the UA staff, they’d done right by me, but experience had taught me why doing so *didn’t work,* even if she told me I was worrying over nothing. Rather than bluff him, I sighed, and repeated what my girlfriend said to me: “Nothing.” At the man’s raised eyebrows, I stated, “Because I talked to you, so it’s not *my* responsibility anymore, it’s *yours*.”

The Pro met my gaze for a long moment, before he nodded slightly. “Glad you’ve learned. Principal Nezu agreed with your points,” he revealed, the hint of amusement peaking up from behind his scarf, but *also* telling me that he’d passed my concerns up the chain instead of dismissing me as either a kid or as someone who couldn’t know what he was talking about it. “It’ll be covered. Your day is Friday. Now go, Ashido’s waiting.”

Smiling, and wondering what that enigmatic statement meant, I nodded back to the Hero, turning to run down the concourse to join my girlfriend. Relaying the conversation as we boarded our train, she just grinned when I finished with a smug, *“Tooold ya!”*

“You did,” I acknowledged easily. “Where would I be without you?”

“Don’t know. Let’s never find out,” she instructed, leaning against me as the train started to move.

*“Agreed.*”