

Chapter One

All things considered, dying wasn't all that bad.

Now, I'm sure that if it had been some sort of slow, drawn-out illness, I would not have been nearly so upbeat about it. Thankfully, I had barely even known I was sick before it killed me. Considering the state of the world I had left behind, dying peacefully in my sleep was probably about the best I could hope for in a death.

Actually, come to think of it, coming back to life in a new world, like I had barely missed a day, might be why I wasn't so broken up about it. That, plus my new life might actually be *better* than my old one.

Granted, I didn't have much in the way of unfulfilled regrets, nor did I leave anyone behind, at least no one that I would miss. In fact, knowing that my manager would be pulling his hair out trying to fill the schedule was actually a plus. He was a dick, and I gave him way too much time and control over my life.

My history here was close enough to what my life had been when I was younger that I could navigate most conversations without even thinking hard. I was still Anthony Clark, [Male, average looks, with messy, dirty blonde hair and green eyes.](#) I was born to middle-class parents, orphaned at ten, earned a GED at sixteen, and was emancipated later that year. My parents names were the same in both worlds, and I was born in the same state. The only real difference was that my parents moved from the US to Japan for work when I was nine. I spent a year struggling to learn the language, becoming just fluent enough to survive and fit in, before both of them died.

Yes, moving across the planet was more than a minor difference, but considering my soul bits had traveled across dimensions, I was just happy I was the same gender, never mind such a smooth match-up.

Of course, there were other major differences, some of them standing out more than others. First, I was twenty-three when I died, and when I woke up in the new reality, I was seventeen, almost eighteen. Second, it was 2026 when I died. According to the calendar, it was now 2XXX.

Oh, and did I mention that this was some sort of superhero world, where a good chunk of the population looked like someone had hit random on the mother of all character creation screens? Seriously, my neighbor was made of *plastic* and looked like a Ken doll. When he tried really hard, he could slightly change the shape of his fingers.

He was an accountant.

Of course, not everyone's powers, quirks they were called here, were useless. You had your tough-guy bricks, your shape changers, your pyrokinetics, your cyrokinetics, and all sorts of

weird, crazy things, ranging from the ability to make your hair grow a bit faster to the ability to grow as tall as a building, with proportional strength. They even had entire colleges dedicated to being a hero, with special licenses. One of the most famous ones was actually relatively close by.

Of course, I didn't have any of that. My parents were both quirkless, which greatly increased the odds that I would be quirkless. Normally, people tried to keep that from happening, some couples even went so far as to get genetic donors to prevent it. Usually, only twenty percent of kids were quirkless, but my parents heard that and thought they were rookie numbers.

All of this info was coming from my other self's memories. We were pretty similar in most things, which I had a feeling was why there wasn't any sort of dysmorphia going on. That said, having our memories so distinct from each other was disorienting.

Either way, despite lacking a quirk, which did, rather predictably, make me a marginalized minority that was often mocked and discriminated against, my life was still better in this world than it had been before. For one, my parents here were smart enough to have life insurance, which meant that, while I was far from rich, I would be able to live off the money for a few more years, as long as I didn't spend too much.

Now, I would have obviously preferred to have more time with my parents, even if these weren't technically the same as the parents I lost personally. But, seeing as that wasn't an option, I was happy to have the help in the form of rent and food money.

Which, unfortunately, was definitely not how my first life had gone. By the time I was twenty-three, I had already racked up quite a bit of debt. I had also dabbled in a few less-than-legal activities, gotten a few regrettable tattoos, and had a few bad friendships that got me into even more trouble. All that never happened here, leaving me with a clean slate and enough money to pay rent and food for a few more years.

All it cost was having my soul and memories whisked away and dropped into an alternate reality version of myself. Thankfully, we combined pretty well, and with my memories being dominant, it felt right to refer to myself as... well, me, as opposed to...

You know, I wasn't particularly prepared to examine the ramifications or implications of... any of that. Not sure I ever would be.

Truthfully, the worst part of the whole experience, beyond the totally non-existent metaphysical meltdown waiting in the wings, was that, with my memories stacking on top of this world, I suddenly saw everything in a new light, and honestly, it was a bit terrifying. When I said people's quirks could run the gamut, I meant it. Quirks could be weird, but knowing that a bank near me had been robbed by a guy who could suck out all the moisture inside you if he held onto you for just a handful of seconds was pretty upsetting. The native memories didn't even bat an eye, that was just a Tuesday, but I knew that was fucking horrifying.

Of course, I would still be a lot more broken up about it if whoever had thrown me into the cycle of reincarnation, isekia addition, hadn't also been nice enough to give me something just a bit extra to help me survive and thrive.

It was just about a month after I "arrived" here, just about when I was starting to feel claustrophobic enough to risk going outside and brave this new, terrifying world, when the most recent bombshell was dropped into my lap.

I may not have a quirk, but that was okay, because I had something better. An honest-to-ROB, genuine, authentic, bona fide, straight-from-the-source, certified System. Sure, I wasn't [a gamer](#), nor was I blessed with the Celestial Forge, Grimoire, Menagerie, or George Foreman Grill. I had the Beat' Em Up System, and honestly, I was okay with that.

Beat' Em Up System - Hero's Story Addition

You have the ability to gain powers and skills through your own effort. All you have to do is defeat a character from an established IP in your original universe.

When you have a charge, you can choose a fictional character from any IP. After confirming your selection, you will be transported into their universe. Your task is to fight and subdue them. Your reward for completing your task is the ability to copy an aspect of what makes that character special. This includes skills, abilities, racial traits, knowledge, and more. These aspects are copied to you and guaranteed to work, though some will retain side effects if they are tied to how the aspect functions. The ability to consume your life force to heal people will continue to do so.

Keep in mind that aspects imbued or conferred by objects, implants, or other physical concepts are heavily scrutinized. Whether you receive the item or the just power it grants, and whether it is even something the System can grant you, is determined on a case-by-case basis.

WARNING! If you die during a jump, that death is permanent! Being rendered unconscious will end your attempt, and you will be brought back to your reality, but death cannot be undone! Injuries will not carry over, but healing death is not part of the System. Further, you can only travel to a standalone version of reality once.

Keep in mind that a character is often made up of many aspects, meaning sometimes a reward may not be as total as you assume. For example, a super soldier who is skilled in the art of war may provide the chance to unlock an enhanced body, or skill with various weapons, as well as many more. A super genius may provide increased intelligence or may offer the knowledge they have gathered. Be aware, this means it is possible to gain knowledge you can't comprehend, which will result in a significant degradation of said knowledge. How these concepts are divided is done on a case-by-case basis.

Specializing or consistently focusing on certain abilities, such as magic, will make it easier to absorb broader variations of similar topics. Due to this universe's bias towards more physically strong biology, you already have an advantage in absorbing physical abilities.

Once your target is confirmed and you activate your ability, you will be deposited anywhere within 20 meters of them. You may select when you arrive, but you will not be able to jump to them during times when they are in another fight, when they are incapacitated, or when they are otherwise incapable of fighting. Defeating a character before they obtain what makes them special will not give you access to future talents, abilities, or other concepts.

There is no time limit once you arrive, and you can return at any time without defeating that character. Keep in mind that the differences between realities, while subtle in some cases, are enough to make their versions of various IPs incompatible with this System, even for simple research.

Please note that true immortality, as well as various lesser forms, are not supported by the Beat' Em Up System - Hero's Story. Also not supported by the Beat 'Em up System are some concepts of potential and various other Systems. Beating those who bear certain powers will give you the ability to absorb aspects, but not the System or potential itself. Again, these are decided on a case by case basis, but incompatibilities with specific abilities or other aspects of targeted characters will be disclosed when you attempt to activate your ability.

As the Hero's Story is driven by experiences and story weight, so is the Beat' Em Up System. In order to gain more opportunities to copy powers, you must live, explore, fight, excel, or even fail, anything that would be considered driving your story forward. Minor events will slowly stack over time, while major ones may even offer multiple charges at once. Be aware that the value of actions cannot be easily measured. The Hero's Story is not driven by math.

For awakening the System, you gain one charge.

It was one hell of a doozy, and I spent almost two days in a daze, re-reading the pop-up, leaving it floating there, constantly drawing my eyes as I tried to keep myself busy. Hell, I spent most of the first day pretending it wasn't there.

When I finally accepted that this was my new reality, I spent some time analyzing what the floating screen meant. With the Beat' Em Up System, I would be able to assemble a potentially incredible array of powers. It would allow me to experience this world without fear of getting stepped on by some random giant rock person.

It might even let me be a hero.

On top of that, as with my new Systems, my growth was just about limitless. There was nothing I couldn't do, eventually at least, and I was only limited by my own actions and what I could do about the stories and characters from home. Which brought up my major weakness, my own memory.

I needed to be able to recall stories and characters, as many as I possibly could. Worse, knowing "that blue guy from that one anime" wasn't good enough. I needed as much detail as possible. My brain was *not* that good at remembering things, and while I did watch and absorb a good amount of media, even in the short twenty-three years I lived, all of that was useless if I

couldn't remember that one fuckers name from that one show, the guy who did that thing that was really cool.

I needed a better class of brain.

Which was why I was currently standing inside a random apartment building in Pasadena, California. To my left was a staircase heading down to the floor below, which ran around a currently broken elevator.

Did I mention I had already selected my first target?

I nervously shook out my hand, a reflexive tic I still had from my old life, as I looked around the hallway. It was remarkably unremarkable, and if I hadn't already been exposed to this setting from television, there was no way I would have picked it out of a lineup. The only standout thing I could see was the yellow caution tape crossing the elevator door.

I took a long breath, steadying myself for the coming violence. Before I could hype myself up and leave, I reached out and knocked on the door.

"One moment!" A familiar voice called out from inside, followed a moment later by footsteps.

To be honest, I wasn't super excited to enact violence on someone so far removed from me that they didn't exist in either of the realities I existed in. I had had my own fair share of scraps, especially as I had gotten older, but that didn't mean I was looking forward to essentially bullying the hell out of a pseudo stranger. Unfortunately, from everything I could see, it was a necessary step. Thankfully, there were ways I could reduce the damage dealt.

Originally, when I was first putting together the plan for my first target, I had considered using a baseball bat, as it was inconspicuous and effective on a variety of people. But the more I thought about it, the worse an idea it seemed. In all honesty, not only was it not efficient, but it was also dangerous. A lot of media liked to play it as if it were something people could just walk off from, but hitting someone in the right spot with a bat could absolutely kill them.

Considering this world was not one where people were more durable, I was extra worried about that. So, rather than a bat, I bought a stun gun. Assuming the people I hit with it weren't suffering from heart conditions, it was readily survivable and wasn't likely to cause permanent damage unless I stuck it in their eye or something stupid. Even better, since my second home was a strange superpower world, it also served as a sturdy baton, meaning I could swing it around if necessary.

Yes, technically, it was rated for humans who were noticeably tougher than normal humans, but I was still relatively sure they would be fine.

I would stay away from hitting them in the heart area, just to be sure.

Oh, and the head too.

The door opened to reveal a tall, thin man with short, tightly trimmed hair, wearing a Flash t-shirt. As he looked at me, he tilted his head. [Sheldon Cooper](#), in the flesh.

"Hello, can I help you?" he asked.

"Yes, you can," I said with a smile. "Just hold still."

I quickly jabbed him in the stomach with the stun gun, the weapon doing its job perfectly. He shouted, jerking around as electricity tensed his muscles. After a moment, I pulled back, and he collapsed, falling heavily back into his apartment. He lay there, groaning and twitching occasionally. I stepped inside and shocked him again, holding it for a few seconds before standing up.

"Oh my god!" Another voice called out, and I looked up to find [Leonard Hofstadter](#) standing further into the apartment, his eyes wide in shock. "What the hell are you doing!?"

"Uh... Bazinga?" I said, shrugging slightly before leaning down and quickly zapping Sheldon in the leg, the man still lying on the ground, groaning and whining. "Right, good luck!"

I quickly turned and booked it down the stairs, pretty confident that Leonard would not be tempted to chase down his friend's assailant. I only just made it down and around the first set of stairs when I felt the transition. Suddenly, there was only darkness, but just as quickly it was gone, and I was standing in my [small apartment](#), the lights off and the shades shut.

Chapter Two

Despite a small swirl of guilt in my stomach for just having zapped the hell out of an innocent person. Attacking innocent people was never going to sit right, but I was going to have to learn to deal with it. I wasn't delusional enough to pretend that it was all okay in the end, just because I planned on eventually using my powers for good, but it was something to focus on.

Once I was more capable, one of my first steps to all of this was getting some sort of healing ability. Not only would it be incredibly useful for personal use, but it would also be a good way to make up for being a hit-and-run asshole. I had at least a few seconds between when I downed my target and I was pulled back to my current home reality, and being able to drop a quick Cure Wounds or Healing Word on my victims would go a long way to assuaging my guilt and restoring any damage I did.

Obviously, there was no way in hell I was going anywhere connected to D&D for a long time, or any flavor of similar setting. Those places were worse than the main Marvel or DC universes in terms of big bad fuckers waiting to snatch people like me up.

Despite the guilt, I couldn't help but celebrate my first successful jump between realities. Well, second jump, really, but this one was the first under my own power, so it felt a bit different. This was the first of many steps, and I was already looking forward to the next one.

When I was done jumping and pumped my fist in excitement, as well as letting out a short shout of celebration, I took a long breath to calm myself, slowly releasing it before I collapsed backward onto my couch.

My heart was still running fast on adrenaline, even as a small screen appeared floating in front of me, congratulating me for completing my mission. I tapped on the confirm button, and the floating screen presented the potential aspects of Sheldon Cooper I could access. The list was pretty short, containing things like Advanced Mathematics and Theoretical Physics. There were even things like Specialized Media Knowledge, though many of those had additional tags that denoted that they were from alternate universes. Unsurprisingly, he had no physical aspects, but thankfully, he did have exactly what I was looking for.

His brain power was split into two facets. First was his genius-level intellect, which was literally called Genius Level Intellect, and his memory, which the System called Advanced Memory Retention. When I read them over a few times, I couldn't help but frown, slightly bummed to find that his memory and his genius were separate features. The System had mentioned that investing in certain branches would make learning larger groupings easier, so it seemed that not being spec'd into intelligence was to blame. It was unfortunate, I would have liked to be a super genius, but I couldn't be too upset about getting exactly what I really needed, which was a near-perfect memory.

While I was tempted to immediately select the Advanced Memory Retention ability, I paused, reading through everything else displayed on the screen. This was my first selection process, so it would be silly to not learn everything I could before moving forward.

I spent an hour tapping on addendums, tabs, and anything else the System had to offer, but by and large, the System seemed pretty intuitive, though who knows how long that would last. While the System seemed happy to explain things I could see, it offered no information on future concepts. I could probably make some assumptions, but even those were limited.

I scanned through everything before finally selecting Advanced Memory Retention. The System asked me one last time, and when I hit confirm, the screen disappeared. For a long stretch, at least ten seconds, nothing happened, before my mind was suddenly doused in cold. I let out a gasp, and memories flashed before my eyes, dozens, hundreds of them. My parents taking me for a walk in the park, eating Ice cream with my grandfather, my first and only dog, the first night I was alone after my parents died. The memories flipped between my own memories and the memories of the native me, but as they did, the separation faded more and more.

When the flashes finally stopped, there was no me and him anymore. I could still recognize the slight difference between my native father and my first father, but any sense of deviation was... gone. There was no more me and him, only us.

We.

Me.

I sat there for a long time, recalling dozens of childhood memories with an incredible vividness, beyond anything I had imagined before. Each memory was like picking up a photo in my brain, as if I could see it. It wasn't what I would call perfect, there were fuzzy moments and missing details, but being able to remember my first dad teaching me how to ride a bike in incredible detail was beyond amazing.

"Who knew I would end up so indebted to Sheldon fucking Cooper," I said with a wet chuckle, wiping my eyes for a moment. "Now I really feel bad for tasing him."

Eventually I coughed and stood, shaking my thoughts free of the past. As tempting as it was to spend the rest of the day reminiscing, I did have things to do. While I didn't work technically, I did help out around the apartment complex in exchange for cutting my rent by a significant amount. The owner was definitely being nice, but with my limited income, I couldn't afford to say no. The landlord cut off much more than I would have made at a normal job for my age, so for now, it took the place of an actual job.

The deal was already in place before the interreality merger, but I wasn't about to get annoyed at the good luck. I tried my best to go above and beyond to thank him for his help, but someday I would repay his kindness properly.

I quickly got ready for the day, having a short breakfast before washing up and getting dressed. When I stepped out into the early afternoon sun, I raised my hand for a moment, blocking the bright rays as my eyes adjusted.

My apartment was on the top floor of a large apartment building, which in itself was part of a large apartment complex. There were six buildings in total, and I was in building number two. I worked to keep the walkways and stairs clean. Thankfully, most of my work was in building two, because taking care of multiple buildings would have been way too much for just me.

The first task for the day was to collect the trash and recycling from each apartment in my building. Thankfully, most people remembered to leave the bags outside their doors, but I usually had to knock on a few doors.

Two trips down to the dumpster later, up and down the stairs, I was forced to knock on a door on the third floor.

"Coming!" a voice said from inside, and a minute later the door opened, revealing a middle-aged [woman with green hair](#). "Oh, Clark! Did Izuku forget to take out the trash?"

"It appears so, Mrs. Midoriya," I said with a nod, smiling as her name popped into my head easily.

So long, terrible name recall!

"I'm sorry, he has been so distracted lately," she said with a frown. "Hold on, I'll go get it."

I waited patiently, and a minute later accepted the large trash bag from her. Before I could wish her a good rest of the day, she stopped me, saying my name softly as I turned to head down to the garbage bin.

"Clark, I'm sorry to bother you, but..." She trailed off, scratching her cheek with one finger, slightly embarrassed. "You're the same age as my son, could you talk to him? He has been cagey about what is keeping him busy, but... maybe he might open up to you? I'm scared he might be getting into the wrong crowd."

Working to keep my face clear, I winced internally. My memory of Izuku, or Midoriya to me, since I really didn't know him that well, was limited at best. However, the few times I had talked to him, he was a withdrawn, nervous guy who was clearly struggling with some anxiety, probably with a dash of self-esteem issues. He was also quirkless, like me, though he wasn't lucky enough to have a R.O.B sponsor like I was.

It was probably why she was asking me, most likely because she figured he would open up to someone who knew what it was like. And I suppose I did, even with my new power. I wasn't what you would call super yet, and I had plenty of memories of what it felt like to be looked down on, from both lives. For a moment, a memory of the people who had taken advantage of me in my first life, the people who had called me their friend and dragged me into trouble.

I held plenty of blame for my past sins and mistakes, but getting mixed up with the wrong people had dragged me down a scary path before I managed to pull free. Not only would I happily keep that from happening to some poor, stuttering guy like Izuku, but if it didn't scream *"driving your story forward,"* I don't know what else would.

"Yeah, I can do that," I said with a nod and a smile. "What time does he get back from school?"

"He is usually home around four thirty."

"I'll try and catch him then," I assured her. "

"Thank you so much, dear," she said, looking like she might cry. "I'm just so worried about him... he is a good boy, but I can't help it."

"I'll talk to him, Ma'am, I promise."

We chatted for a bit longer, mostly Mrs. Midoriya worrying and fretting, before I left to finish up my first task for the day. Of course, moving some trash around wasn't all I was in charge of, but thankfully, today was a slow day. That gave me plenty of time to hang out and wait for Midoriya to come home.

I waited for a while at the bottom of the main stairwell, tucked into a corner on a bench, watching the complex entrance with a cigarette in my lips. Technically, it was illegal for someone my age to buy smokes here, and if people caught me, I would likely get some dirty looks, but I

still liked to indulge sometimes. It was a carryover from my first life, and I really didn't do it that often.

I would probably have to quit eventually, it wasn't exactly a good look, even if it was more socially acceptable in Japan.

At about four forty-five, I spotted the green-haired [Izuku](#) running down the street, turning into the apartment complex entrance. He gave me a nodding bow as he passed, before continuing to run up the stairs. He was moving at a fair clip, too, a fast jog, taking the steps two at a time. A few minutes later, he came right back down, now wearing much more casual clothes, not even noticing me this time. As he kept jogging, I groaned, put out my cigarette, and went after him.

Despite what I had said to Mrs. Midoriya, I was not going to talk to her son quite yet. If my first childhood and young adult years were anything to go off of, he would just wave off someone trying to give him the smarten up speech. It was much more likely to work if I caught him in the act of doing something dumb, especially since I couldn't use the "I've been where you are, kid," speech on him.

After all, I looked just around the same age he did. I was still on the fence about whether I should consider myself to be actually the same age, as while I had more memories, I wasn't actually that much older. Plus, I was now running on teenager software, and I could definitely feel a slight change in my emotions. It was a bit scary, but I would grow out of it eventually.

I had before, after all.

I jogged behind Izuku by a good fifty feet, thanking whatever god was listening that one half of me had been more interested in maintaining my body than the other. I was never unhealthy, but here I had actively spent some time staying in vaguely good shape, probably because you never knew when you might need to run for your life from someone made out of poisonous gas, or a living, talking pile of broken glass trying to mug you.

Eventually, after a long jog, Midoriya stopped and turned off onto [Takoba Beach](#), which was locally infamous for being a trash trap, where ocean currents dumped waterlogged junk. Of course, unwilling to leave well enough alone, the nearby lazy people started chucking old appliances there, turning it into an illegal dump.

Or, at least, that's what it used to be.

Now, as I leaned heavily on the railing that marked the edge of the upper platform around the beach, I couldn't help but gape at the mostly cleared sands. Don't get me wrong, a good chunk of one side was still covered in garbage, but a *shocking* amount of the beach had been cleaned.

I was starting to have the feeling that Izuku wasn't getting into trouble like his mom thought.

I stood there for a while, leaning against the railing and looking out over the beach. I watched as Izuku grabbed a giant hunk of trash, a big appliance that might at one point have been a dishwasher, and started dragging it away from its massive pile. Poor guy hadn't even stopped to take a break from his jog.

Standing nearby, leaning against the front end of a little [Kei truck](#), was a thin, almost skeletal man, with a sharp, angular chin and a head full of bright blonde hair. He was saying something to Midoriya, who nodded along as he worked. I had missed their initial interaction, but it was clear they were familiar with each other.

Suddenly, as Midoriya yanked the dishwasher free, the trash pile's structural integrity failed, and it started to lean over him. I opened my mouth to shout a warning, but it was too late, and a fridge that probably weighed three times as much as him began to roll down at Izuku.

Suddenly, the man by the truck blurred, and at the last second, he caught the fridge with one hand, the other reaching out to stabilize the pile. He looked completely unbothered by the weight, and had somehow put on an incredible amount of bulging... chiseled... muscle...

"Holy fuck, that's All Might."

Chapter Three

Luckily, despite my shocked outburst, the duo did not hear me over the sound of the waves and settling trash. After a quick moment of panic, I stepped away from the railing, walking backward until I was hidden from their line of sight by the edge of the seawall. I then sat down rather heavily on a nearby curb, my mind racing.

I obviously knew who All Might was, as he was one of the most famous heroes on the planet. Hell, thanks to my enhanced memory, I easily recalled watching several news stories about his exploits while I still lived in America. But I had *never* heard anything that suggested he had the ability to change forms like that.

Technically, just because that guy looked like All Might didn't mean that he was All Might. Imposter quirks did exist, after all. However, I had seen him catch a falling fridge like it was cardboard. That level of strength was difficult to replicate. Having super strength and the ability to copy someone's looks? That was an unlikely combo.

That meant there was a good chance that that was All Might, which meant it was a pretty safe bet that his ability to shift forms was a secret. If it was, that turn meant Midoriya was in *deep*. Whatever this was, All Might knew him well enough to trust him with a secret that had never been revealed throughout his whole career.

Again, assuming that was actually All Might.

I stood up slowly, peaking over the lip of the railing to see that the situation had returned to normal. All Might was back to his skeletal form, leaning against the truck while Izuku was moving junk around, throwing some into the truck bed. As I watched, I couldn't help but furrow my brow, considering my options.

I could walk away and avoid the trouble. It was clear that, whatever was going on here, it was not simple. While All Might was known to be a cool dude, there was no way he would personally invest time in some random quirkless teenager unless *something* was going on. And in a world like this one, it was bound to be complicated. If I wanted to play it safe and keep myself out of trouble for now, the smartest thing I could do was walk away and pretend I didn't see anything.

After all, I never told Mrs. Midoriya I would talk to Izuku today, I could catch him another time.

On the other hand, inserting myself into whatever this was, even if it was just to shake hands, congratulate Izuku on his hard work, and explain his mom was worried about him, was bound to be worth a chunk of my charge. If it actually turned out to be as complicated as my slightly paranoid mind said it was, this could be worth a full charge.

After a few seconds of thinking, I stood up and dusted myself off, my mind made up.

"Went from being scared to go outside to introducing myself to the world's top hero and his pet project," I said to myself, shaking my head. "Which of my four parents dropped me on my head when I was little?"

I walked to the stairs and started to make my way down. Unsurprisingly, All Might clocked me first, spotting me the moment I stepped onto the stairs. Meanwhile, I was already on the beach before Midoriya spotted me, the green-haired high schooler panicking a bit and dropping the microwave he was about to throw into the back of the Kei truck.

"Clark?" He asked, eyes going wide, glancing worriedly at the hero standing just a few feet away. "W-what are you doing here?"

"Looking for you," I admitted easily. "How long have you been doing this? I can't remember the beach ever being this clean."

"A-about nine months," he admitted, clearly not sure how to respond to my statement.

"Well, that explains why you've been spending so much time away from home," I responded, stopping beside the teenager, sticking my hand out to All Might. "Hey, nice to meet you, I'm Anthony Clark. I live at the same apartment complex as Midoriya."

"[Yagi Toshinori](#)," he responded easily, shaking my hand. I gave him a nod and looked back at Midoriya.

"Well, you're doing good work, Midoriya, but you might want to tell your mom what you're up to," I explained with a frown, looking around the cleaned beach. "She is worried sick about you, worried that you're getting mixed up in the wrong crowd. She wanted me to talk to you, since you keep dodging her questions. Probably figured we would be able to commiserate together."

All Might, Mr. Toshinori, seemed to be caught off guard by my mention of Midoriya's mother, as if he hadn't even considered the possibility she would be worried. Midoriya, on the other hand, looked guilty, clearly knowing his mom was worried, which begged the question of why he hadn't told her.

"You didn't tell your mother?" Mr. Toshinori asked, looking at Midoriya in surprise. "I mean, I never told you couldn't..."

"I didn't want to..." Midoriya trailed off, and I struggled to keep from laughing when he looked at me.

Dude couldn't look calm and nonchalant to save his life.

"What possessed you to take this on yourself?" I asked, nodding towards the parts of the beach that were still covered in trash. "I mean, it's cool, but hell, that's a big project."

"I... I wanted to get in shape and prove myself," he explained, now glancing at Mr. Toshinori for approval.

"I'm keeping an eye on him, keeping him from hurting himself, helping him improve," Mr. Toshinori explained. "I teach at UA University."

"Ah, okay... does that mean you're training to apply there?" I asked, and this time I couldn't help but chuckle when Izuke went through a dozen different emotions at once. "Man, you should never play poker, Midoriya."

Panic spread on his face, but a reassuring look from Mr. Toshinori seemed to put his spine back into place, and he nodded.

"Yes, I am. Do... you think I have a chance?" he asked, sounding like a desperate kid looking for approval, even younger than he actually was.

"I mean UA is pretty competitive, but stranger things have happened," I admitted, catching him off guard. "What, did you think that just cause your quirkless, you couldn't be a hero?"

"I... most people just say no," he admitted, looking down. "Tell me it's too dangerous."

"Well fuck 'em. " It's your life, you kick ass however you want," I said, ignoring both of their wincing at my curses. "Besides, even if you fail, that doesn't mean you can't be a hero."

"What do you mean?" Midoriya asked, losing his stutter in his curiosity.

"There are different kinds of heroes, Midoriya," I explained. "Beyond just being a firefighter or a cop, you could do all sorts of things to help people. Nobody wearing spandex could ever come close to saving as many people as Alexander Fleming."

"I... who is that?"

"The man who invented Penicillin," Mr. Toshinori answered, a smile on his face. "And your friend is correct, Midoriya, there are many types of heroes. Though I would add that, while professional heroes might not have the numbers as a doctor who cures diseases, or develops a new treatment, they are just as important, just in a different way."

Both Midoriya and I nodded, me in agreement and him in understanding. The simple amount of even small-time villains in any area with enough population density meant that professional heroes were a necessity, as the police just wouldn't be able to handle the variety of dangerous quirks, at least not without using their own, which they weren't allowed to do.

Midoriya looked down at his hands, which were callused and covered with rough scrapes from his work. As he was thinking deeply, I couldn't help but notice he was actually surprisingly built. I had maybe half a foot of height on him, thanks to my western heritage, but he was certainly more muscular than I was.

"That might be true... But I want to be the type of hero who inspires others," He said, clenching his fists hard enough that I could hear it. "I want to make people smile, like y- Like All Might."

Steadily ignoring the blatant slip-up, I nod in understanding.

"That's a pretty cool goal," I admitted with a smile. "I mean, being the good guy sounds nice, and getting paid to help people... It's a win-win. Probably not the most heroic of reasons, but a man's gotta eat, you know?"

"I assure you there are worse reasons to be a hero than to get paid to help people," Mr. Toshinori pointed out. "After all, being a criminal pays as well."

"Do you want to be a hero?" Midoriya asks. "Even though you're quirkless?"

"Well... technically..." I trailed off, glancing at Mr. Toshinori, All Might, the well-publicized good guy who, by all reports, was generally just a cool, upstanding dude, and decided I could risk revealing at least part of my secret. "Technically, I might have recently discovered I might not be as quirkless as I thought."

"What?! You have a quirk? What is it? How does it work?" Midoriya asked. "I've never seen you use it. Does it have a strange trigger? How did you never notice it before? Are you a late bloomer..."

He trailed off into a rather intense barrage of questions that quickly devolved into muttering, too soft for me to really understand. I raised my hand and karate-chopped his head gently, startling him out of his muttering madness.

"Take it easy, champ," I said with a chuckle, the green-haired teenager rubbing the back of his head in embarrassment. "To answer... some of your questions, I seem to have a stockpiling quirk, one that was filling so slowly I didn't even realize it was working. I seem to build up a certain amount of charge over time, which I can then invest into myself to give me... well, I guess you could call them sub-quirks."

"That... is an interesting ability," Mr. Toshinori responded, scratching his chin. "Why are you just noticing it now?"

"I'm hardly an expert, but I think I've been instinctively investing it into itself, helping it get faster," I explained with a shrug, unbothered by my lie. "And recently I seemed to have reached a limit on that. So, the charge was building up, and since my usual target couldn't be invested in anymore, I finally noticed it. I was trying to remember if I had ever felt that way before, and ended up investing it into my memory. Pretty sure my memory is somewhere at peak human levels now, and it definitely didn't use to be."

I had been considering the best way to hide my System while still gaining powers, as the government really liked to keep track of that here, especially in Japan. Luckily, it wasn't that hard to do with the right research. Stockpile quirks were a pretty common thing, though most of them weren't hugely impressive. On top of that, self-improvement quirks were also a thing, though again, most of the time they had hard limits. Having them both together would certainly stand out, but no more than anyone else who won the genetic lottery. This was doubly true since most people would assume I would have some sort of hard limit, as that was pretty common with self-improving quirks that showed any potential.

"How fast can you improve yourself?" Midoriya asked, having somehow pulled out a notebook that he *definitely* didn't have before.

"It doesn't seem to have a standard pace, the charge just builds up over... time....," I said, trailing off and tilting my head to the side. "Are you taking notes on my quirk?"

"Uh...Y-yeah?" Midoriya responded. "It's kind of a hobby..."

"Huh... well to each his own," I said with a shrug. "I'll keep you updated if I figure anything else out."

Apparently, showing that I was okay with him taking notes was the wrong thing to do, because the previous barrage of questions returned with a vengeance. I weathered the storm until Mr. Toshinori reminded Midoriya he had a time limit, and the teenager let out a yelp and started moving trash into the truck again. I watched for a few more minutes before waving to Midoriya and giving Mr. Toshinori a short bow. Before I could make it off the beach, Toshinori called out to me, the thin man following after me.

"Mr. Clark, a moment."

As he called out, a shiver of déjà vu and Karma coming home to haunt me ran up my spine. I had poked the Chinese proverb, and now the interesting times were coming home to roost.

"What's up?" I asked, turning around to face him.

"You seem like a good kid, and if used correctly, your quirk sounds like it could be very flexible," He responded. "How serious were you about being a hero?"

"Well... I do like the idea," I admitted truthfully. "I honestly intended to apply to one of the hero universities, just after spending some time letting my power work."

"If I might make a suggestion... UA would give you the training and knowledge to better guide your quirk," He pointed out. "Plus... It would be nice for Izuku to have a familiar face in the same year as him."

"Are you asking me to babysit?" I asked, raising an eyebrow.

"No, no, nothing that intense," he assured me with a waving gesture. "But by my judgment, you have a good head on your shoulders. Maybe a little flippant, but smart in a way Izuku... usually struggles in. He could use a friend to help him along."

"...You realize you're rushing my plan quite a bit, right?" I responded with a frown. "Building a foundation was supposed to happen over time, I have a lot of catching up to do."

"You'll be in good company," He responded, and I got the sense he was talking about Midoriya.

I leaned over to look past him, watching as the aforementioned teen tied a rope around the fridge that had almost crushed him. When he started to drag it towards the truck, inch by inch, I let out a long sigh.

"Alright, fine, I can't let the little doughboy get chewed up by and spit out," I responded, letting out a huff. "But if he doesn't make it in, I want you to use your teacher pull to delay my entrance for a year. I'm not getting stuck being rushed if he can't make the cut on the first try."

"You don't believe in him?" he asked.

"Oddly enough, I do," I responded, surprising myself with how true the words were. "But sometimes the world has a way of stomping on people's plans."

"That is true," He said with a nod. "Very well, you have my word, if Izuku doesn't make it, I will get your application delayed a year so you can prepare properly. And thank you."

He bowed, and I nodded, and we quickly traded numbers. I gave a final farewell before heading up the stairs, back the way I had come.

My day suddenly got a lot busier. But on the plus side, I now had a new charge.

Chapter Four

Despite the jump charge sitting heavily in my System, burning a hole in my preverbal pocket, I did not immediately head off all gung ho, jumping to the first character that popped into my head.

I had made an agreement with Mr. Toshinori, and I intended to make good on it, and not just because he was actually All Might, though that did add a level of certainty to the task. Plus, the fact that the agreement alone had netted me a full charge, I had definitely been properly motivated to go through with it.

Originally, before stumbling onto something that looked a hell of a lot like a snapshot from a montage sequence, my plan had been to take it slow. I hadn't lied about wanting to be a hero after a year of working on my "quirk." I had intended to let the simple little things in life, things like meeting people, making plans, learning a skill, and training my body, slowly build up charges. I would have been ecstatic with a single charge per month and pretty satisfied with six charges in a year. I would have slowly built a base of powers that would serve as a foundation to put me in the big leagues.

Stumbling onto All Might and... whatever was going on between him and Midoriya put a stop to that idea. I was now more or less on the track of a much more extreme ride. Instead of taking it slow, I got to see if I could get enough charges to do something impressive before something impressive, and unfortunate, happened to me.

I was set on this course, though, so there was no going back. While it wasn't the one I had intended, I couldn't find it in myself to be upset by that.

Applying to UA was a whirlwind, and even at a rush, I barely made it. Turns out applying to a prestigious university, just a little over a month before the hero course tryouts were set, was generally frowned on.

Thankfully, I had an in, and Mr. Toshinori was able to push the paperwork through. He claimed he had used a little white lie to convince the administrators to accept it, but I was willing to bet he just walked in as All Might. People around here were pretty obsessed with him, not that he didn't earn the praise. People were usually falling over themselves to help him out.

Either way, he confirmed that Midoriya and I would be taking the UA Entrance Exam together. The reality of my agreement settled in pretty quickly, and while I wouldn't call it regret, I did realize that I had dove into the deep end, and it was certainly weighing heavily on my mind. Admittedly, I did feel better about it after Midoriya stopped by to talk. The poor guy was clearly stressed about the test, and knowing that I would be there was already doing wonders for him.

Now he only broke down into muttering once or twice every conversation, rather than nearly constantly.

On top of applying, I was also brushing up on my schoolwork, a significantly less daunting task now that I had a near-perfect memory. While I rather conveniently had clear memories of two school careers, neither of them would qualify as overly studious. I knew enough to pass the GED test, which left plenty of holes that needed patching. Midoriya let me borrow his books, and after reading through a few of them, I was no longer worried. Perfect memory may not be the same as being a genius, but it was kinda like playing one on TV. I might not know how it all worked, but I could fake it long enough to get paid.

In between the studying and preparing for my new, surprise end-of-the-month goal, I spent most of my downtime for the week considering what exactly my next jump would be. There were obviously a lot of power concepts that I needed, a lot of concepts that I wanted, and even more that would be nice to have. Unfortunately, not only did I just have one jump, but I had no idea when I was going to get another one.

I needed to make this one count.

The many hours I spent considering my options led me to the conclusion that I needed to get the most bang for my buck, which meant trying to find someone whose singular power offered the widest range of increases. With any luck, copying that would give me a full spread. To try and ensure I wouldn't get screwed over, like how I got stiffed out of Sheldon Cooper's genius, I would stick to physical attributes for this jump. According to the System, I was already slightly in tune with the physical aspect of power concepts, which meant the reward I got would be less parceled out.

Now I just needed to find a target.

The first idea to pop into my head was [Aura](#), from [RWBY](#). I hadn't watched much past the second season, but that was more than enough to see that it would be a great place to start building a foundation. The problem was that, despite physically reinforcing you, Aura was supposed to be a manifestation of the soul, and as far as I knew, my soul was pretty standard.

That, combined with the potency and variety of Aura, meant it was likely going to be parceled out into categories. Now, having any of the various aspects of an Aura would be nice, but I needed more than just a single aspect, I needed an all-around improvement. I was too squishy to be punching out villains, so I was even willing to sacrifice a bit of potency if it meant having a solid all-around upgrade.

On top of that, even if it might have worked, I was not nearly ready to take on anyone with their Aura unlocked. All I had was a fancy memory and a body that was maybe, at max, five or ten percent tougher than the body from my first life. Sure, the scale might be different for someone who had been training, but I certainly had not been. Even the weakest Aura was beyond my reach, especially since it was always on, preventing most ambushes, and the people with it were usually heavily armed and well-trained. On top of that, I would only be able to jump

to someone whose aura was at a hundred percent, as anything less would be considered attacking them when they were already hurt, which the System didn't allow.

In truth, my options were incredibly limited. I needed someone whom I could beat, someone whose powers weren't too esoteric, because I would likely barely get anything from them if they were. Even the pool of people I could beat by catching them off guard was restricted, not by the targets but by their worlds. There was no way I was going to Marvel, for example, just to punk someone with barely any power, only to lose access to that reality for any of the greater abilities there. Even the MCU, which was honestly small time compared to most of the other Marvel universes, would be wasted on picking off an easy target.

Eventually, an idea did occur to me. Someone who fit what I was looking for almost exactly. They were likely just over twice as strong as a normal person, with greater healing, stamina, and durability, as well as resistance to poisons and disease. Even their lifespan was significantly enhanced.

The only issue was the danger. My memory of the... opportunity was clear. I had a chance, a few seconds, during which the person, my target, was distracted, and in a scenario that was perfect for me to ambush them. Even better, they were destined to be dead no more than thirty seconds later, when the entire place exploded around them. I might even be able to keep a good guy from being injured in the process.

But the risks were great. If I messed up, the character would have no qualms about killing me. Not subduing me, not threatening, just near instant death.

And yet by and large, it was still the perfect target. I could appear in the perfect spot, just out of their view, and in the optimal position.

It was the equivalent of walking along the edge of a cliff. Realistically, I should be fine. Nothing about what I was about to do was more difficult than just walking forward a few feet and grabbing something. No part of it should push me to my limit or require any real skill. And yet one mistake and I was likely done for.

It was a huge risk, a massive risk. And yet it would likely be the first of many. I was looking to become a hero, and that meant putting myself in harm's way to help people. I needed to push past the fear, trust myself, and do what I needed to.

Of course, the risk wasn't the only thing holding me back.

This opportunity, the certainty involved, was only possible if I was willing to kill the target. The sequence of events, which were very tight, with almost no wiggle room, only had the chance of working if I was willing to be lethal in my "subduing."

The target was responsible for killing a lot of innocent civilians. He believed, at least partially, in the rhetoric fed to his people, and his hatred for the "good guys" was absolute, though justified in many ways. Killing him, even if he wasn't just thirty seconds from being evaporated by a nuclear-powered self-destruct, wasn't what I would call morally ambiguous. He

was a bad guy, and while his enemies were far from lily white, morally speaking, they were just trying to defend the Earth.

Which was currently being burned to the ground by my target's boss. Literal city by city evaporation, burning the world to the ground.

And yet I still hesitated at the idea of killing.

The Beat' Em Up system required a level of moral flexibility that, for the most part, I was comfortable with. I didn't feel great about tazing the hell out of Sheldon Cooper, but when it came to my survival and, eventually, using my powers to help people, I considered it worth it. When I was able, I would eventually offset the issues the requirements of my System required, and until then, I would do my best to keep myself on the up and up, which I believed I was doing for my second target.

And yet I was worried. Worried that this would somehow corrupt me, or that I was taking it a step too far. If I started killing, would I eventually just start killing all of my problems away? I was just some guy, why did I have the right to do the moral math that I was doing? It might have been paranoid, but considering the dilemma that lay in front of me, it wasn't exactly unexpected.

It was around a week after I agreed with All Might when I finally worked up the nerve to commit. I knew everything I needed to, and I was certain I was as ready as I would ever be. Early Monday morning, while the sun was rising over the city of [Musutafu](#), I stood alone in my apartment, taking slow, calming breaths. When I had successfully organized my thoughts and composed myself, I finally spoke my target's name.

"[Teal'c of Chulak, First Prime of Apophis](#)," I said, my entire mind focused on the specific moment, the specific universe I wanted to travel to. "Confirm."

For a single moment, everything went black, like a light being flicked off, except rather than suddenly darkness, it was a sudden nothingness. Even the sensation of gravity vanished, as did the feeling of standing on the ground. Thankfully, both of those things returned before I could even consider adjusting.

When the light returned, I was standing in the [SG-1 Gate Room](#). Beside me was the [Stargate](#), already dialed and connected, with [Daniel Jackson](#) standing just a few feet short of the ramp. Just ahead of me was Teal'c, armed with a [staff weapon](#), aimed vaguely in Daniel's direction.

I appeared in the episode "[There But for the Grace of God](#)," in which Daniel Jackson gets sucked into an alternate reality. There, things were not going so well, and that included the fact that Teal'c, who was normally a good guy for most of the show, was still working for the enemy, still loyal to [Apophis](#). And to make things worse...

"Auto destruct in thirty seconds." An electronic female voice called out.

Yeah, that.

Thankfully, despite all of that, I was still confident. Because I was just out of evil Teal'c's sight, and there just happened to be an [M2 Browning](#) in front of me, loaded and ready.

I took one step forward and grabbed the gun, which immediately got Daniel's attention, the archeologist looking at me with wide eyes. As I swiveled the large weapon the rest of the way around, facing it toward Teal'c, I grabbed the weapon's charging handle and pulled it back easily, knowing exactly how to do it thanks to several late-night YouTube marathons in my first life.

Of course, by now, after just a few seconds had passed, Teal'c had finally noticed I was there. After all, spinning around a gun as big as an M2 was bound to get some attention.

Unfortunately for him, it was too late.

When I pushed down the firing lever, he was still spinning around, the staff weapon clicking open as he readied to fire. When the first fifty caliber round left the chamber, it hit his shoulder and blew his arm off in a mess of gore. Somehow, despite the massive damage, he still managed to pull the trigger of his alien weapon. A burst of yellow energy fired from the head of his staff and slammed into the gun shield of the M2, but did nothing to stop the flow of bullets.

At around ten rounds per second, holding the fire lever down for three seconds meant thirty rounds left in the gun's barrel. Even with my terrible muzzle control, when I finally stopped, there was nothing left of the [Jaffa](#) but chunks of various sizes.

I let go of the gun and turned, looking at Daniel as he stared, wide-eyed and jaw hanging open.

"What are you waiting for?" I asked, gesturing to the still-connected Stargate. "Go!"

That seemed to break him free, and he ran up the ramp, giving me one last look before passing through the event horizon of the stable wormhole. I watched the rippling effect, taking in the rather iconic sight, before the System yanked me back, the empty void of nothingness flicking back on before I appeared right back in my apartment.

I was standing there for just a moment before I promptly vomited all over the floor.