

**(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)**

**A/N: Mirko and Izuku talk~**

**-x-X-x-**

“So what’s your deal, exactly?”

She waits until the end of the day to approach him. To be fair, Izuku always knew she would probably want to get his measure quickly. In fact, he’s a little surprised that Mirko didn’t immediately go up to him before the shift even started.

But then, the Rabbit Hero isn’t quite as reckless or impulsive as people like to say. Sure she has her moments, but most of the time she can at least stop and consider a situation objectively. She knows how to wait and see what’s up before rushing in just as much as any other Pro Hero.

In this case, it had become obvious over the course of their shift together that she’d definitely been curious about him but not to the extent that she would let it affect her work. More than that, Mirko had used the shift to get a feel for him without actually talking to him directly. Izuku could tell he was being tested, that he was being weighed and measured. It seemed now he would find out what his ‘score’ was.

Turning away from his computer, Izuku pulls off the dispatcher’s headset and offers Mirko a smile.

“I’m Izuku Midoriya, the Phoenix Program’s Dispatcher. Pleasure to meet you properly, Mirko.”

Crossing her arms over her chest, Mirko huffs a bit.

“Yeah, I know who you are and what you do around here. But what exactly makes you so necessary? And why do all of the others listen to you like you’re in charge instead of Blonde Blazer?”

Izuku arches a brow at that. Those are interesting questions from a woman who just got a front row seat to what he brought to the table. Then again, there isn’t too much derision or accusation in her voice. It’s entirely possible that Mirko is just curious to see what he says while having already formed her own opinions in her head.

“Well, the Dispatcher is a role that PDN brought into being, as I’m sure you well know. It might be unique as far as Pro Hero Agencies go, but then PDN is unique in general, isn’t it? And yet... it works. It works quite well. That’s also why the other members of the Phoenix Program listen to me. Because at this point they have the experience to know that I provide a net benefit to their work.”

His mild, safe answer prompts a grunt from Mirko. She doesn’t look too happy that he’s not giving her anything juicier, but to be fair she also doesn’t look too upset either. Instead, it’s more like she just doesn’t know what to make of him. Tilting his head to the side, Izuku chuckles.

“I felt like the two of us worked well enough together today. You followed my lead and didn’t complain. Was the setup to your liking or do you have issues with it?”

Frowning, Mirko considers his question for a moment before answering.

“It was... fine. Just restrictive. I’m used to having more freedom. I don’t like being told what to do.”

Izuku nods along amicably, as if he expected as much. But at the same time...

“You’ll accept it though if it helps people, won’t you? And there’s no denying that you did plenty of that today. You helped numerous people on your first day as a member of the Phoenix Program, proving all those rumors about you just being a destructive anti-hero bordering on villainy to be false.”

Mirko stiffens up at that last part, bristling for a moment.

“Tch... I don’t need the Phoenix Program or you to prove that sort of thing to people.”

“Perhaps not. But we need you.”

His response completely catches Mirko off guard. She looks a little bewildered by the sudden change up.

“What?”

Izuku just shrugs, leaning back in his chair and speaking in a matter-of-fact tone.

“The Phoenix Program is experimental in nature, obviously. I believe these girls want to do better, really I do. I believe every member wants to be a proper hero, both in reality and in the public eye. However, there are plenty who would rather see us fail.”

A knowing glint appears in Mirko’s red eyes, though she stays quiet as Izuku continues his explanation.

“I’m sure they’re already moving around in the shadows, looking for ways to take us down. We represent too big of a chance to the status quo, you see. If we can prove the idea behind the Phoenix Program, that being the rehabilitation of villains, as viable... well, the sky is the limit isn’t it? Only, there are certain parties who would rather keep the limit much closer to the ground.”

Mirko has never been one to mince words or hold her tongue. So when she speaks, Izuku is only a little surprised.

“The Hero Commission. You’re talking about going up against the Hero Commission.”

Izuku doesn’t have to feign his blink, even as he smiles at her afterwards.

“That’s exactly right. Though obviously it’s neither PDN nor the Phoenix Program’s desire to make the Hero Commission our enemy. But in the end... if they already *are* our enemy through no fault of our own, we have to be ready don’t we? It’s only a matter of time before they make a move, after all.”

Considering that for a moment, the Rabbit Hero just grunts.

“Where do I come into that though? For all you know, I could be the ‘move’ you’re talking about. I’m only here because the Hero Commission forced me to be.”

Izuku shakes his head and chuckles again.

“No, you’re here because the Hero Commission fucked up and gave you too many options.”

Mirko stiffens at that, looking surprised by his knowledge. To be fair, it’s not the sort of thing that ‘Izuku Midoriya’ should know. But he has an explanation.

“It’s obvious, isn’t it? You aren’t the spying type, Mirko. You also aren’t the sort to just bend over and take it from the Hero Commission. They’ve wanted to put a leash on you for a long time and they finally got the opportunity to do it. But if they give you too few options, then you might decide to do something truly unwise. So they have to make it seem like you have the illusion of choice.”

Izuku gestures around them.

“And what better way to do so then to offer an option they consider the absolute worst of the bunch? Working alongside ‘villains’ in an untested and brand new program. Tarring yourself by association. Surely you would never pick that option. Surely you would never go for such a thing, not with your storied reputation and career.”

Shrugging, Izuku arches a brow.

“But they underestimated you. They didn’t take it seriously enough. And so you were able to slip through their fingers and wind up here.”

The air in the room is still and so is Mirko. She stands there staring at him with wide eyes and shrunk pupils, disbelief radiating from her every pore. Finally, Izuku brings it all home by giving her a guileless smile.

“How’d I do?”

Blinking, taken out of her shocked stupor, Mirko narrows her eyes at him, clearly seeing him in a brand new light. Whether that was a good or bad light remained to be seen.

“I suppose that answers my question about what your deal is and why you’re here. You sure you don’t have some sort of Mental Quirk focused on analysis or something?”

Technically he did at this point. He had a whole library of mental quirks right alongside the physical ones. But of course...

“Afraid not. I’m very much Quirkless, which is why I’m here sitting at this desk while you go out there and fight crime and save innocents with my voice in your ear. We each have our roles to play, Mirko.”

Mirko grunts again at that, but Izuku detects that this grunt is more of a grunt of acknowledgment and agreement than the previous ones were. She even nods her head once, even as her frown doesn’t fully go away.

“I guess we do, Midoriya. Still... the Hero Commission isn’t going to stop is it? It’ll keep gunning for me... and all of you as well.”

Izuku shrugs.

“Yes, almost certainly. But they won’t find us an easy target. We’re stronger together, that’s for sure.”

Mirko uncrosses her arms but her hands remain clenched into fists at her sides.

“Meanwhile, Shroud and Red Eye are still out there, growing more organized, more powerful, and more prepared by the day. Tch, if only those idiots at the Hero Commission would stop trying to keep us from just doing our jobs...”

Izuku hums, not quite agreeing but also not disagreeing either. On the one hand, he acknowledged that Pro Heroes needed some form of oversight. People with that sort of power in general required oversight of some kind for society to function, lest the entire world devolve into feudalism with exceptionally powerful Quirk Users simply using their Quirks to hold dominion over territory, making their own little fiefdoms.

On the other hand, however, the Hero Commission was so bad at their jobs it wasn't even funny. The oversight was all about controlling 'problematic elements' like Mirko or PDN who upset the status quo, over taking care of things like Pro Heroes only in it for the money, or people like Endeavor with toxic waste in their personal lives.

The Hero Commission was rotten and stagnant. It needed to be removed at the roots and replaced with something better. And only once that happened, only then could Izuku allow Shroud to be taken down and Red Eye to be defeated.

Of course, he can't say all of that to Mirko, now can he?

“We won't let them stop us from doing what needs to be done. You made the right choice coming to PDN and the Phoenix Program, Mirko. Forget remedial training... you're going to be an example to all these women of what a Pro Hero really should be. And together we'll tackle both the Hero Commission *and* Shroud.”

Mirko stares at him for a long moment, but Izuku isn't worried that she can see through him or anything like that. Even if he's not wearing a mask right now, his façade is still perfect. And indeed, finally she nods and holds out a hand to him.

“You’re not half-bad, Midoriya. I look forward to working with you more going forward.”

Izuku rises from his seat and takes her hand, shaking it right back. Though he’s caught a little off guard when she takes ahold of his elbow and pulls him in close so she can whisper in his ear. For a moment, he wonders if she’s going to threaten him. But no. Instead...

“... Though you should really have a talk with a certain someone about eavesdropping.”

The whispered words send a spike of amusement through Izuku, though of course his face doesn’t show a hint of laughter on it as he pulls back. Instead, he feigns befuddlement... followed by faux realization. As their handshake ends and Mirko walks away, Izuku makes a show of crossing his arms over his chest and looking around.

“Courtney?”

There’s a pause... and then Courtney appears off to the side. Izuku had known she was there the whole time of course, but he’s impressed that Mirko was aware of her as well. And of course, he’s pleased that he finally has an excuse to call her out on all her spying without revealing that he himself knew she was there.

Looking like she’s been caught with her hand in the cookie jar, Courtney squirms for a moment before trying to appear completely calm and unfazed.

"Uh... sup?"

Izuku just gives her a serious look though, eyebrow raised as he glances in the direction Mirko had departed to.

“She caught you spying on us. You shouldn’t be eavesdropping on other people’s conversations like that. Especially your own teammates.”

The way Courtney flushes and reacts to that would have let Izuku know all about her current 'investigations'... if he didn't know already. As it stands, she squirms for a moment before shrugging.

"Just... curious is all. That is the Rabbit Hero, after all. She's kind of a big deal... and now she's part of the Phoenix Program. It's weird, right?"

Izuku smirks.

"Weird? How?"

Courtney scowls.

"W-Well... just... you claimed that the Hero Commission gave her too many options, but what if that was part of their plan? And isn't her whole story that Shroud 'goaded' her into this latest act of wanton destruction? What if she's involved with Shroud somehow and this is all just some trick or trap?"

Izuku hums. Courtney had been there when Malevola confessed the truth about her nature as a spy for Shroud... but she hadn't yet worked up the courage to confess her own duplicity. Meanwhile, she also knew that Izuku was Vigil and was keeping that under wraps while getting training from him. It was an interesting dichotomy, one that clearly left Courtney in a perpetual state of self-loathing... and constantly looking for reasons to direct her anger at the people around her instead of herself.

Finally, he sighs and shakes his head.

"Nobody can control the Rabbit Hero, at the end of the day. They can try... but they'll all fail. Courtney, is there something else on your mind? Something that-mmph?"

Izuku isn't expecting Courtney to silence him by suddenly moving forward and kissing him. He's expecting her to either break down and confess... or flee the conversation using her Quirk. Instead, she crosses the distance between them

in a quick few steps and promptly pulls him in for a tongue-filled kiss that cuts him off.

Well now, that's certainly one way to run from her problems...

**-x-X-x-**

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