

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

A/N: Courtney gets healed, Izuku and Kaina have a busy schedule to keep.

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As far as agreement goes, 'Fuck it, I'm in' probably isn't the sort of thing the average criminal mastermind would be happy to hear, Izuku has to admit. But to be fair, he knew exactly who the woman in front of him was. Courtney, aka Invisibitch soon to be Invisigal, was an irreverent, sarcastic, and all around sassy young woman who had been run down by the world and become prickly and uncaring as a defense mechanism.

However, underneath that uncaring façade was someone who actually cared quite a lot, despite her words. Izuku should know... after all, he knew everything there was to know about Courtney and Mandy's relationship. He knew full well that he'd just gone from settling things with Momo Yaoyorozu and Blonde Blazer to recruiting the first 'infiltrator' of his planned Phoenix Program.

Some might say he'd been a bit too optimistic about things by scheduling it all like this, but Izuku didn't think so. All For One's files had given him everything he needed to pull all the right levers and convince Momo and Mandy that they should get onboard with him. Even Courtney arriving early to 'scout' out their meeting place was factored into his plans, as was her deepest desires.

It wasn't enough to promise cash to the woman in order to get her to 'betray' her childhood friend and roommate like this. No, there had to be something more in it for Courtney. Luckily for her, Izuku had that something more... right at his fingertips.

"I'm glad to hear it, Invisigal. Let's shake on it, shall we?"

Reaching down, he removes one of his gloves and holds out his hand to her. Courtney hesitates for a moment, her nose wrinkling at the name 'Invisigal',

which was something she clearly still wasn't used to. She also inspects his hand carefully, as if worried that it might be diseased or trapped or something.

Technically, it is a trap... but she has no way of knowing that. Just as she has no way of knowing that this trap is for her own good. Like those cages set up to capture certain types of animals in a humane fashion so they can be transported to a new environment for release back into the wild, Izuku is setting up a series of such things for not just Courtney, but several others as well...

For now though, he stays focused on the matter at hand, smiling behind his skeleton mask as she finally steps forward and hesitantly puts her hand in his own. The moment they come into contact with one another, Izuku sets about fixing Courtney's greatest issue... her asthma. He does this by giving her a second Quirk.

It's nothing special, nothing major... in fact, Izuku has to wonder what All For One was thinking when he stole this Quirk. Did he just got on a stealing spree from time to time and find a way to grab as many Quirks, weak or strong, as he possibly could?

That's really the only reason Izuku can think of for why the man had a random 'lung strengthening' Quirk among his library. All it did was make someone able to hold their breath longer really, allowing them to contain much more air in their lungs before they had to breathe again.

It would have been a good Quirk for a swimmer, Izuku supposed... but for Courtney in particular, it's life changing.

Indeed, the effects are immediate, with her pulling back from him as her eyes widen in surprise and she takes in a deep breath... only to keep breathing in until she suddenly coughs. The key though is that in this case, she's not coughing because of her asthma acting up... but rather because of the exact opposite. The absence of short breath, of wheezing of any kind, catches her by surprise.

"I... I... w-what did you just do to me?"

Tilting his head to the side, Izuku lets out a modulated chuckle through the mask that Mei made for him.

“Fulfilling my end of the bargain, of course. I did say I would cure your asthma, did I not?”

Blinking rapidly, Courtney does some quick breathing exercises right in front of him, staring off into the distance and clearly not caring if she appears rude or not. Izuku doesn't mind, standing quietly as she assesses her new physical condition. Kaina does scowl a little bit at the impolite behavior, but she stays quiet all the same.

Finally, Courtney runs a hand through her hair and blows out a blast of air.

“Fuck... thought I'd have to earn it or something, you know? Prove myself worthy over time or whatever.”

Izuku just shrugs.

“You will earn it, Invisigal. You'll earn it by being my eyes and ears in the Phoenix Program. You're part of my organization now, and as I said... I will support you to the fullest as long as you work for me.”

That last part is a bit different... originally, Izuku had said he would support Courtney to the fullest if she decided to work *with* him. It's a small distinction, one he intentionally puts in to see if she catches it... alas, she does not.

She does still look a little conflicted though, even as she hides it behind a carefree grin and an impish salute.

“Aye-aye, boss man. I'm your gal through and through... you've more than proven that I was right to hitch myself to your wagon, I'd say.”

Izuku hums in the back of his throat at that, before finally nodding.

“Very good. Well then, you have your orders Invisigal. Infiltrate the Phoenix Program. Learn as much as you can about the inner workings of both it and PDN. But most importantly of all, give no signs that you are a double agent. Engage in no forms of sabotage unless I give you the order, do you understand me?”

Courtney hesitantly nods.

“Yeah... I think I understand. You seriously just want me to... be a hero?”

Behind his mask, Izuku smiles brightly and broadly.

“That’s exactly what I want from you.”

The conversation ends shortly after that, with Courtney departing. There’s a brief silent pause as they watch her go... and then a portal forms and both Izuku and Kaina step through into a room in the manor, away from prying eyes or invisible ears.

Only once they’ve completely left the possibility of an eavesdropper behind them does Kaina finally break her silence.

“You’re really sure this will work?”

Izuku, for his part, removes his mask and sets it down on the nearby table even as he moves over to it and begins to shift through the dossiers spread out across the table’s surface.

“I’m confident, yes. Is it risky? Certainly... but nothing of worth in life is gained without a little risk.”

Kaina makes a noise of agreement in the back of her throat, even as she joins him at the table with her arms crossed over her chest.

“Still... you’re going to have the entirety of the Phoenix Program aside from Blonde Blazer be plants by your villain identity Shroud. Not a single one of them

will actually be trying to redeem themselves and become real heroes. They'll all just be... faking it in order to make Shroud, you, happy."

Izuku grunts, considering some of the pictures on the table in front of them. There are quite a few at this point... and some of them are quite high profile.

"At first, yes. However... I'm not being cavalier with my choices. Every single one of these people has the potential to become a hero... they just need an opportunity. And sure, maybe they'll start out thinking that it's not real, that they're just faking in order to give Shroud what he wants... but as time goes on, as they see what good they can do with their Quirks and actually help people, I suspect we'll start to see quite a few of them shift."

Courtney in particular, Izuku had a lot of faith in. Certainly, she might seem like a bad egg on a surface level, but Mandy wouldn't give up on her... and that connection would eventually lead Courtney to betraying Shroud. Izuku was sure of it.

Of course, that was his plan for all of it. Convince these villains to infiltrate the Phoenix Program independent of one another, all on Shroud's behalf... and then convince them to be better than their base selves as their Dispatcher, Izuku Midoriya. With the help of Blonde Blazer's ever optimistic self, he felt like it was workable... even if it was a bit iffy.

"Not all of these people are really as acceptable as you think though. These two in particular..."

Izuku watches as Kaina pulls two of the dossiers out of the pile, grimacing as she places them front in center before him. His eyes slide over their pictures before moving down to their files... and after a moment, he sighs.

"Perhaps. Having outright murderers in the first iteration of the Phoenix Program might be too optimistic, even for me."

Plans needed to be adaptable and willing to change... and Izuku hadn't grabbed Kaina from Tartarus on a whim, he'd grabbed her because he needed a

villainous second in command who wasn't really a villain and who deserved a second chance. Ignoring her advice here was just... foolhardy.

That's why, in the end he picks up the dossiers for Himiko Toga and Janelle, aka Coupe, and holds them out to Kaina.

"We'll recruit these two into Shroud's organization directly then. No Phoenix Program infiltration, just two more pairs of hands for you to utilize as we recruit more thugs to fill out our numbers. Or do you think they're not worth even that much?"

Kaina grimaces at that, her eyes flicking back and forth across the two dossiers for a moment before she reaches out and takes them both from him.

"... No, they can be useful in that way, I agree. So long as we keep them on short leashes and use a firm hand, it should be fine..."

Izuku smirks. As much as the purple-haired woman is doing her best to act tough about it, he knows full well that both Toga and Coupe's stories resonate with Kaina. The former is a woman whose Quirk turned her into a monster and the latter is a woman who has spent her entire life killing for money.

Sure, they might not be redeemable through the Phoenix Program... but who says that the Phoenix Program has to be his and Kaina's only route to redemption for villains? If they're going to reform Japan... then they'll have to be flexible and adaptable, the whole way through.

With Janelle and Himiko officially passed off to Kaina, Izuku turns his attention to the rest of the dossiers on the table in front of him, the other impending members of the Phoenix Program's first team.

... It wasn't intentional, but the five remaining alongside Courtney are all women. Really, he hadn't set out to do such a thing... it was simply a combination of using a modified version of All For One's plans and his own research on the matter that had led him to these five villains in particular.

Each of them has had their run ins with the law. Each of them has a criminal record just like Courtney did. However, none of them has crossed too great of a line, not like Toga and Coupe. At the same time though... they're all quite eccentric in their own ways, each with a unique tale of woe and sadness holding them back from reaching their full potential as heroes.

Some, funnily enough, aren't even Japanese. And one claims to not even be human, though as he looks down at the red skinned, horned heteromorph in one of the dossier's headshots, Izuku isn't convinced that Malevola Gibbs is actually a demon. She's far more likely to just have an Inherited Quirk from some out of the way spot in the Australian Outback.

The other foreigner, Alice, is only here in Japan because she was picked up by a Japanese Talent Agency who wanted to make her a star. Alas, that hadn't really worked out given her... behavioral problems. Now she was stuck here, trying to make it work solo as Prism... while also committing crimes on the side that were continually tearing her down.

And then there were the natives.

Ochaco Uraraka, aka Uravity was perhaps the most boring of all of them. A UA graduate from the same year as Momo Yaoyorozu, she hadn't been able to cut it as a Pro Hero... or rather, hadn't been able to make enough money as a Pro Hero. Instead, she'd turned to petty thievery and what not, using her Quirk in inventive ways to sneak into places and burglar them before fleeing into the night.

Manami Aiba, aka La Brava, had a bit sadder of a tale, having been connected to the former internet celebrity known as 'Gentle Criminal', an independent villain who went around acting the part of the chivalrous gentleman thief from centuries past. La Brava was his sidekick and close confidante until he'd died trying to save innocent lives in one of the many conflicts between the League of Villains and the Pro Heroes.

And finally, perhaps the most interesting and tragic of the bunch... Fuyumi Todoroki, aka Killer Frost. She was the daughter of the current Number One Pro

Hero, Endeavor. The man who had taken over after All Might passed away all those years ago.

However, it turned out that Endeavor wasn't quite as heroic as Izuku had always thought. Oh sure, Izuku knew with everyone else that the man had a slightly difficult personality. It was part of his branding, his 'charm'. He didn't smile like All Might did. You would never get a 'Do not fear, for I AM HERE!' from the current top Pro Hero.

But he was competent at the very least and when he took to the field, he saved lives as much as he defeated the bad guys. Unfortunately, what Izuku now knew about his home life and the circumstances that led Fuyumi to villainy had forever tarnished Endeavor's image in his eyes. The man was just as indicative of the corruption in society as the Hero Commission was, at the end of the day.

He'd even used his connections to keep Fuyumi out of jail after she'd earned her criminal record... which in turn would allow them to recruit her for the Phoenix Program and hopefully make her the hero that her father never had been.

These five women along with Courtney and Mandy would make up the first seven person team under the Phoenix Program, with Izuku acting as their Dispatcher. All that was left... was to get them all onboard.

Speaking of which... Izuku turns to Kaina and smiles as he picks up his mask and fits it back onto his face, returning to being Shroud, criminal mastermind and the only man to successfully break someone out of Tartarus in... ever, really.

“We should be going if we don't want to be late to our next meeting. Shall we?”

Kaina sets the dossiers for Toga and Coupe back down on the table as well and steps back to his side with a nod.

“I'm ready when you are.”

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A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!