

Plus One

Bakugou / Ochako

Von Kroko

Kapitel 5: Anchor

She kneads the back of his neck until his shaking gets weaker, and his grasp onto her feels less like he's a drowning man holding onto a lifebuoy in the middle of a storm. They stay huddled up to one another for a couple more minutes, until Bakugou stirs in Ochako's arms and wakes her from a catnap she didn't know she was having. Something strains against her wrist and she notices that she's still got the little napkin wrapped around it. She unties it and tosses it onto the nightstand. Then she places a kiss on Bakugou's forehead, picks up his shirt from the floor, puts it on as a gown to ward off the nightly cold and makes for the bathroom.

After taking a little shower and brushing her teeth, she feels much more like a person again. Turns out torrents can also have a cleansing effect, because Ochako feels completely and utterly rinsed for now. She gazes at herself in the mirror and finds that she looks tired, and not happy, but still... content. Which is a long shot from where she's been for a while now.

Ochako slips back into Bakugou's shirt, steps outside the bathroom, and finds herself suddenly confronted with her makeshift gown's owner. Bakugou tried to open the bedroom door at the exact same time as her, and now they're standing in the doorway at a bit of an impasse. His eyes and nose are reddened as if he aggressively wiped his face with paper towels. He's back in his underwear and has his pants slung over his arm.

"I'm gonna need that back", he says and holds a hand in the direction of his shirt.

The penny drops.

"Oh no", Ochako says firmly, takes the pants from his arm, properly folds them and places them over the back of one of the seats by the window. She turns forcefully, causing the shirt to blow up around her, and points at Bakugou. "You're not leaving when we're both like this."

"But-"

"No buts." Ochako shakes her head so vigorously it makes her hair fly. "Heartbreak is a

serious condition. And guess what, mister? Doctor's in, and she's prescribed you snuggles all night long!"

For a second, Bakugou pulls up his upper lip and looks at her as if she said something mildly disgusting. Then, much quicker than anticipated, he throws his hands up and relents. "Fine", he growls. "Just let me use the damn bathroom."

"Permission granted", Ochako says with a solemn nod.

Bakugou rolls his eyes, harrumphs and plods down the corridor.

When he returns, the smell of gasoline has been replaced with the scent of Ochako's body wash. He's also not in his underwear anymore. He crawls underneath the blanket behind Ochako without any encouragement from her, making her smile. Looks as if someone isn't as dismissive of snuggles as he'd like her to believe.

She turns around and sneaks one arm around his chest. "That was nice", she murmurs against his shoulder.

"You mean considering you had to get yourself the gayest guy at the party for this?"

Her laugh comes out as a huff. More like considering that you are Bakugou, is what she almost says, but she keeps it to herself.

They lie together for a moment, two puzzle pieces that don't quite fit, but still form a whole. As the light drizzle of rain starts pattering on the tall bedroom windows again, they listen to each other's breathing.

"I always just assumed it'd be either me or you", Bakugou mutters, his mouth half buried in her hair.

Ochako nods wordlessly. Despite their prior failed attempts at a long term relationship with Deku, it had become obvious that both of them were more than ready to give it another try. Or rather, that both of them would have been ready to marry Deku off the spot, if given the chance. Ochako had always been pretty convinced Deku reciprocated both their advances, but it somehow seemed as if the clearer she was about her intent, the more skittish he became. She used to think he maybe just wasn't cut out for commitment, and she was ready to work with that as well. Until she heard about his and Melissa's plans, of course.

"When I was younger, I used to pine for him so hard", Ochako says, and is surprised to hear herself talk. She's never told anyone about this, not Deku, not her friends, not even her parents. But somehow, she's been laid bare fifty times over tonight, and this is something she needs to get off her chest. "I used to keep all my feelings and thoughts about him locked up in my head like something dangerous. But part of me was always having these silly little dreams about being by his side, travelling with him, building something with him... maybe settling down..." She pulls her legs up and covers her face with one hand as if she could hide the way she's blushing at the thought even now. "But you wanna know what's funny?" She taps one finger on

Bakugou's chest and smiles up at him. "I was always so sure it was going to be you."

"Yeah, right." Bakugou frowns.

"Bakugou, listen. Ever since I met him, not a single day has passed without Deku telling me about "Kacchan this, Kacchan that"", she says with a giggle. "The way he looks at you, it's like you hung up the moon. I was always so fascinated by what you two had. I used to call it a fated battle between rivals." She makes a determined fist and shakes it in the air. With a sigh, she casts her eyes down and wraps her arm around Bakugou again. "And honestly, I think... I think I would have been alright with it being you."

He makes a noncommittal noise, and Ochako already assumes that was his contribution to the conversation, but then he takes a deep breath in and out through his nose and says, with surprising emphasis: "Yeah. Likewise." He scratches the back of his head, as if he said something very embarrassing. "I mean... at least you were a worthy opponent. And if it had been you, I could have been sure that idiot is being kept in check, no matter what."

A warm affection blooms in Ochako's chest at the earnest compliment and she rubs her forehead against Bakugou's shoulder in the same way a cat would.

"But this...", he says, back to frowning now. "This seems like he can't be far enough away from us."

Ochako bites down on her lower lip. "Maybe we pushed him too hard."

"Trying to get him to take a stance is not pushing him too hard", Bakugou says, not without a disgruntled undertone.

"Or maybe it's his way of not trying to hurt anyone", Ochako suggests.

Suddenly, Bakugou pulls his arm out from under her, sits up and pulls his knees up to rest his elbows on them. "You know what I think?", he says, and cracks his knuckles. "That guy just can't allow himself to be happy."

Now wholly confused, Ochako also pushes herself up into a half sitting position next to Bakugou and tilts her head, hoping she's misunderstanding him. "Are you saying Deku is not happy with Melissa? Bakugou, that's... that's terrible...!"

"That's not what I'm talking about." Bakugou's expression is grave, and when he looks at her, his eyes are clear, and there is no resentment in them as he says by way of explanation: "Look, I know Deku. Better than anyone."

Now it's Ochako's turn to frown. "There is more to this."

Bakugou chews around on his tongue for a bit, obviously hoping she'll drop it, but that statement was far too bold for her to let it go.

"Alright, fine." Bakugou drags one hand through his disheveled hair and takes a laboured breath. "Pretty much exactly one year ago, I told him I don't mind if he wants us both." He makes a quick gesture pointing at Ochako and himself in quick succession.

Ochako raises her brows in astonishment. The surprises just keep on coming tonight. "What did he say?"

"That's the thing: Not a single goddamn word. Next day, it's like he's dropped off the face of the earth. Poof, gone!" Bakugou makes an explosion gesture with both his hands. "Maybe he's feeling guilty for stringing us along, maybe it's just Deku being Deku. But in any case, that fucking nerd is absolutely terrified of... of the idea of having this. Of being able to keep both you and me without sacrificing anything, without any conditions, without consequences. Being happy and accepted." Bakugou rests his elbows on his knees again and watches his fingers as he laces them into each other. "It scared him so much that he started running, and he hasn't stopped running ever since."

"But that's nonsense!", Ochako says, way more forcefully than she intended, and she knows she sounds angry, but she doesn't care. "He deserves to be happy, more than anyone else!"

"Yeah, try telling him that, see how well it goes." Bakugou's voice is oozing bitterness.

And Ochako does feel the urge to do exactly that. But not only has she attempted to get it through Deku's thick skull time and time again, to no avail apparently - it also hits her once more that tonight's the night that Deku got married, and that that train has left the station.

"Either way, Deku's made his choice", she says, much quieter again. "And we just gotta... learn how to live with it."

Bakugou swallows heavily. Weariness creeps into his features again, chasing away the clearness in his eyes. Ochako scoots closer, leans her chin on his shoulder and puts one arm around his waist. She stays that way for a moment and rubs comforting circles into Bakugou's skin with her thumb, until she finally finds the right words. "But we deserve happiness, too. Don't you think?"

Bakugou turns his head a little to look at her, and Ochako immediately realizes that Bakugou has been asking himself that question for quite some time now. She lays back down and stretches her arms out for him. "C'mere", she says quietly, and Bakugou follows her invitation with the least amount of theatrics he's displayed tonight. He pulls the blanket over them both, wraps his arms around her, rests his head on her chest and lets her comb her fingers through his hair. His warmth is calming, and comforting. The weight of his limbs pins her to the mattress, an anchor that keeps her from floating away.

"I'm really glad I had you as my plus one tonight", Ochako says. And it means more than that, but she knows Bakugou understands.

“Yeah”, he murmurs. “Anytime.”