

Pretty Visitor

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/25181218) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/25181218>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	僕のヒーローアカデミア Boku no Hero Academia My Hero Academia
Relationships:	Dabi/Takami Keigo Hawks , Takami Keigo Hawks & Todoroki Enji Endeavor
Characters:	Takami Keigo Hawks , Dabi (My Hero Academia) , Todoroki Enji Endeavor
Additional Tags:	POV Second Person , Character Study , Introspection , Stream of Consciousness , Angst , POV Takami Keigo Hawks , Dabi is Todoroki Touya , Light Masochism
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2020-07-11 Words: 6,078 Chapters: 1/1

Pretty Visitor

by [Nicolefrickle](#)

Summary

You wish that Dabi wouldn't look at you like fresh meat.

You wish you didn't have to be here with him - fucking killing yourself over him - night after night.

But here you are, anyway. Lucky you.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

He's there in the dark with you.

It's nothing you aren't already used to. It's not like Dabi hasn't been living behind your eyelids, every singular time you go to close them, but right now he's realer than that. He's not an imprint of what he's done to you. He's next to you, breathing too heavily and ragged for his sleep to be a peaceful one, but he doesn't deserve it, anyway.

You hate him—you think.

But you like him when he's sleeping. He's manageable then, and maybe your hatred becomes something you can manage too, because you're good at that, right? Grinning and bearing it. You can sit up and look down at him—the only time you're looking down at him, because he's taller than you when you stand opposite of him, and he fucks you, you don't fuck him—but you see his face while he's asleep and you can stomach it. It's not a villain's face. And it isn't pretty, either, it's scarred and rough and you know where it cracks, but right now you could almost forget the way he smiled when he was trying to kill you.

"You aren't dead though, are you, angel?"

He'd said it just like that when you reminded him of it. Made it sound like it was on purpose the way he kept you alive, and not a mistake or a casualty of luck; bad for him, good for you. He didn't try to prove his hands were clean. But you know him—you hate that you know him, but you do—and he was trying to kill you with all the sincerity in the world.

So why are you in bed with him?

You kick that thought into a scrap-pile along with what remains of your self-preservation, light a match, flick it, and watch all your problems burn away.

And you think, maybe you are learning something from Dabi, after all.

He told you it would happen. You just didn't believe him until you killed for the first time.

And then you killed again, and again, and again, until names became the tally marks that you carved behind your poster of Endeavor, right into the wall, because you had to keep track of all your wrongs, somehow. No one else was gonna do it for you. The commission gave you a long leash and you know what they care about and what they turn blind eyes to.

(At least, when it's *you* they're looking at.)

You wish someone would scold you for what you've done. More than that, even, that someone would pick you up by the ankles and shake all the feathers from your wings, asking how many of them have both saved and taken a life. It's a balancing act. You know that—you just didn't know how heavy both sides of the scale would be.

And it makes you sick, imagining the one holding you accountable as someone you know. Your father. Your mother. One of the black suits from the commission.

It makes you *scared* to imagine that person as Endeavor.

In your world, he's hiding your tally marks. But you know the real Endeavor would make it his business to root you out and uncover them, scowling at you afterward in disgust, and betrayal, and pity. Which would sting like nothing else, coming from him. Your insides twist into knots imagining him ever finding out what you look like with your mask cracked.

He will, though. It's not like you can keep gluing it back together indefinitely, doing this.

What is it you're doing, exactly?

Infiltrating, you think, but that hasn't been the right word for it ever since you started waking up in cold sweats forgetting what kind of person you were, that day.

Observing, then. Like you're doing right now as you watch Dabi sleep, your fuzzy eyebrows knit, mouthing his name. Your name. Neither of them are the ones your parents gave to you, but it's easier when you keep that disconnect and it's Dabi with Hawks and not Touya with Keigo—or if you want to get real morbid with it—a killer with another-killer-but-for-good-reasons.

You think back to before. When you were the number two hero without any tallies to your name, starting out on your top secret Observations with an air of lightheartedness and a skip in your step, for show. Because the commission presented the idea to you on a silver platter like they always do, making it look nice and pretty, and you knew you couldn't say no to them. You're the only one who can do it right.

And you think that because they convinced you of it.

They weren't wrong. You can't imagine anyone else in this position, still alive. You were clever enough to let Dabi sink his fingers into you and claim you as his personal property—if only so that Shigaraki couldn't touch you, and Twice would trust you more, and Toga would ask if your feathers bled but otherwise left you alone.

It was easy to find a spot for yourself among villains. And maybe that should've been a red flag, but you're a pair of red flags yourself. Your wings marked you from the very beginning.

So you look at Dabi, coming to terms with how quickly things had spiraled to this. You're kicking yourself for not tightening up after High End, and instead desperately trying to make up for the mistake you made by throwing yourself into the fray, double-time. Because you don't *make* mistakes. You'd been trained out of them, relying instead on your quick thinking, your ability to micro-adjust, which your pretty little head already knew how to do because of your quirk.

Making decisions is your strong suit. Making those decisions *fast* is what you get to brag about, when you feel like bragging.

You don't feel like bragging now. You're a mess, and you let yourself be one because it's late and you're ringing around that spiral independent of the decisions you make or how fast you make them. You're exhausted. Nothing matters to you in the dark. And maybe that's just the

sleeplessness talking, but closing your eyes next to Dabi is a game of chicken and you don't want to play right now, when you're still thinking about how he tried to kill you.

Instead you run yourself through a dozen possible futures where you kill him first, while he's sleeping, just like this. It wouldn't take more than one, single well-intentioned feather.

(It's almost cathartic to think about the kind of chaos that would wreak.)

But you know who he is, so you can't kill him.

You can't put that tally behind Endeavor.

Your breath hitches all of a sudden. He's looking up at you. You don't know when he opened his eyes, you were too busy imagining his blood running down and filling in the cracks of his scars, like ink in the swirls of your fingertips.

“You look like shit.” His voice is croaky, and he doesn't even pretend to be worried about why you look like that. He probably expected you to be gone by now. You're usually in such a rush to open that dirty window on the far side of his room and take flight. It's your way of forcibly ridding yourself of his touch—one flap of your wings at a time.

But you stayed tonight. You don't have an excuse other than this feeling of an invisible string connecting the two of you together, and you're afraid of what'll unravel if you start pulling on it.

So you didn't pull.

You're ignoring it. And you know you'll keep ignoring it even while that string gets so twisted and knotted around you that it feels like a net—one your wings can't function in—and still, it won't be any different from how you've been living already.

You don't realize your hand is clenched until you unclench it. You can almost see the individual veins filling back in from where you'd deprived them.

“Thanks,” you finally reply. He snorts at you. His eyes close lazily and stay that way for a long time, while tendrils of smoke leak out from his nostrils.

And you hate him again, because he's awake. Because he makes you second-guess yourself. Because you can't kill him.

Because you know his name, and he knows yours.

“C'mere,” he says, finally, and you tense but lean towards him. It chills you to your bones, how you follow his orders even when there's nothing holding you to it.

He grabs the back of your neck, pulling you against him completely. You feel like you're made of stone as your body slots against his, jutted hip bones grinding together, sharp and severe. You wanted to be touched, but not like this. Not by him. Dabi isn't the antidote to everything wrong with you, he's the venom still-leaking from your wounds and the last thing you needed was more of him.

You think, if someone like Endeavor was to hold you like this, you would've cried in relief. You would've melted into him as the thousand-pound weight on your back rose up into the sky. But it's Dabi, so instead you feel that weight tenfold; you feel nothing and everything and you pull him closer to swallow your placebo, right on schedule, to numb yourself to it all.

Dabi's hand trails across your bare back and down your arm, slowly, grabbing your wrist at the end of his exploration of you.

"You've got goosebumps," he says, but it's not for your benefit. It excites him when you're scared in the same fucked-up way it excites you to be touched by him. He warms the embers in your chest and between your legs, makes you feel exposed right down to the marrow of your bones. Your adrenaline pulses even though you don't need it, you're not in fight or flight. You let him do as he pleases.

Because it's him.

Because he doesn't treat you like you're *special*.

He treats you like the mess you are. And he's a mess himself, but he's also embracing of that fact. His scale of right and wrong is already years-broken while yours is still tipping by the day, on the wrong side, and you watch yourself sink as everything you thought you hated rises.

With him, you're the worst possible version of yourself. For once in your life you aren't the golden child or the commission's pet project—failed or otherwise—you're something uglier than a mirror will ever show you. That's why you let him touch you the way no one else has, ugly and all.

And really, it's not like you deserve the embrace of the number one hero. It's what you keep telling yourself while Dabi fixates on your goosebumps, touching the places where he'd hurt you and failed to kill you and made his failure a piece of your skin. A piece of you. Your body betrays you like it always does, leaning into Dabi like it wants its fix.

It's just telling the truth, you realize.

You don't have to put on a front with him like you do with everyone else. Your fans. Yourself. And Endeavor, above all, who's seen your mask again and again—and maybe he's also seen the way you've so carefully glued it back together—but he doesn't know what you're hiding with it. He'd hate you if he did. You share a scar with your hero but you understand, in your heart, that staples would feel right at home embedded in you, too.

Dabi lifts your hand up to his face and bites the top of it, absentmindedly, while you watch him. You still hate him; that never goes away. But you also know how to harness that feeling and do something productive with it.

Or something unbelievably stupid.

"Touya—"

He lunges at you. You didn't think he would because he was playing so nice with you, holding your hand, but you should've known better than to trust him even in his mellowed state.

You're pinned under him now—wings and all. He isn't strong enough to keep you caged without a little help from his quirk, searing at your wrists to remind you what he's capable of, how things will get a thousand times worse for you if you try to fight it. So you don't.

"Oh?" Dabi says. His voice is too high, like a guitar string posed to snap. "You really want to go there?"

You keep your mouth shut, even when he leans in and mentions how loose your tongue was before, when you said his name. He dares you to try it again.

You shake your head stubbornly.

In the uncomfortable silence that follows, Dabi leans in and studies your face with his darkening eyes, his lips in a smirk. You know you should be scared of him. You know he hates you just as much as you hate him. He only keeps you around for the same reason that he does anything: because he's bored of the world and how uncruel it is compared to his unrefined tastes.

He's like a troubled teen who throws rocks at stray dogs after school. And you've been that dog before, but you've also been the kid he drags along with him, to witness his violence, because he gets off on that most of all—the look in your eyes when he tells you that he'd lost count of his tallies.

So now you're just the stray that can't keep away from him.

And he knows it.

He tightens his grip around your wrists, slotting his knees on either side of your thighs. Your adrenaline once again begs you to make use of it. But you don't listen. The only thing you hear is the voice nestled deep inside your pretty head, the unmistakable sound of a line being carved into drywall, and you think—you want him to hurt you.

You've never wanted anything so much.

"Little bird, little bird..." his voice trails away, and your skin offers up another sea of goosebumps. "Aren't you brave, tonight?"

But you don't feel brave. It isn't courage keeping your eyes locked with his, it's the weight of your debt, and your guilt, and the way Endeavor won't leave your thoughts even while you're lying here under his son.

You find your voice, somewhere inside of you. "Are you going to tell him?" you ask, and you don't have to give Dabi any context, for him to know.

Dabi laughs sharply. "Are *you*?"

And all of a sudden you realize—he's *right*. You could tell Endeavor yourself. You could've told him all along. In fact, it should've been the first thing out of your mouth when he'd visited you at the hospital.

Why didn't you?

You remember sitting up and staring at him. You were bed-bound and wingless while Endeavor clenched his fist tightly to his side, and neither of you had said a word, for the longest time. Until it was painful. You'd been the one to break the silence because you were so nervous and hollow inside, and you could *taste* his guilt, and you'd repeated the same exact words he'd said to you when his left-side face was bandaged just like your back was. How you were taking responsibility for yourself. But you weren't back then and you still aren't now, and you'd lied to your hero. Again.

That's when he'd finally lifted his head up and you'd seen the bright blue rings of his eyes, and you'd thought to yourself—no wonder you could never look at Dabi's straight-on.

So you didn't tell him.

You have no excuse for it either, other than how hard it'd be. How you can barely even hold yourself together as it is, switching between your hero-mask and your villain-mask, and the last thing you needed was to give away both Dabi's secret and the fact that you'd become so hopelessly intertwined with it. With *him*.

You're Dabi's pawn. And like you said before, it was consensual going into it, but you didn't know back then the extent to which he'd use you.

Is he using you, right now?

To get you to tell Endeavor for him?

"I'm not gonna say *anything*," you growl. You think you're showing strength by resisting it, but Dabi just laughs harder and makes you question everything you thought you knew.

"He'll find out," Dabi replies, like it doesn't bother him. "And he'll find out about you too, hero."

It makes your blood run cold. Because as much as you *say* you want the freedom of being exposed—shaken upside-down by your ankles—you're still terrified of what lies on the other side of it. You don't know what it's like to be bare, anymore.

You look somewhere off-set from Dabi's eyes.

And he's impatient, now. You can see it in the way he shifts on the mattress.

(God, you hate that you know him enough to dissect him like that.)

Dabi looks at you. He's moved past your little spat and is watching you intently, waiting for you to give up whatever point it is that you were trying to prove. You don't know if you even

had one—you were just reluctant to let him take anything without a fight. You'd be doing a disservice to yourself.

But you're done now, done fighting, and Dabi senses how you've become pliant. He grins like a wolf and starts looking for your *tell*. The way you'll press your head back into the pillow and spread your legs ever-so-slightly, give yourself to him, let him cure his boredom like that's all you were ever good for. Because he hadn't woken up to fight with you, either. All he wanted was a nighttime snack.

Are you gonna give it to him?

You don't want to. But you can't help it, the way you tremble in anticipation and can't quite swallow the lump in your throat to tell him no, don't use me, I have nothing left to give.

But you're also still thinking about how badly you needed—and still need him—to hurt you. How easy it'd be to succumb to Dabi while he's still nice enough to ask you first, even though he knows the answer. He expects this from you. You're trained for it, after all, like one of Pavlov's dogs, salivating as he looks at you. He rings the bell and you come crawling.

You're drawn to him. And the only excuse you can muster for it is the fact that you *know* what to expect from him too, which is something you don't have the luxury of when you're floating out there in uncertainty, stuck between worlds. Between masks. But in his ratty bed and mismatched sheets you know exactly what you're getting. It's a creature-comfort, being fucked by him.

You want comfort, right now.

And you always do, but Dabi makes you feel deficient in it.

There's a moment of pause while you press your head back into the pillow, *telling* him. But you get no further than that before something tugs you violently in the opposite direction, lurching in your guts. It's more convincing than your adrenaline was—even more than the string connecting you to Dabi—and it's telling you that you can't *be* here with him any longer. At least not while you're like this.

While your scale is tipping too far to the wrong side.

You can always tell when it's happening. The hair on the back of your neck will stand up and your wings'll puff out like you're in danger, because you *are*, and suddenly you're drowning these thoughts in the darkness of your head, holding them under with your hands, thoughts that should've never been able to rise in the first place. Like how it'd feel to let your hero-mask stay broken, for all the trouble it's caused you. For the way it makes you hate yourself when you wear it.

At least you still have enough sense to call that a shitty idea. That's good.

And at least Dabi listens when you tell him to get off of you, for once. He lets go of your wrists like they'd burned him. You don't think about how he's probably just too tired and

disinterested to make you do what he wants, or how it's not like you won't be back soon enough, anyway, salivating at the sound of his bell.

But for now—you're flying.

You're ridding yourself of his touch from the moment you take off, outside, away from him. He doesn't say goodbye, and neither do you.

(He knows that you'll be back, too.)

No—you shake your head furiously at that thought, because this is when you need to be whole again.

To be strong.

You're busy enough trying to keep yourself together to still be thinking of him—fucking killing yourself over him—but you're off-balance and every little piece of you can feel that you are. You can't be strong like you want to be. And no matter how hard you struggle, you can't push that weight off your back. You can't rid yourself of the way your shirt smells like smoke, like him, even in the wind.

You'd call yourself cursed, but then again, that sort of negates any kind of personal responsibility for what's happening to you. And you'd—you know—*killed* people.

So you'd brought it on yourself. And if you're cursed, you deserve to be.

You deserve to be judged.

You're soaring, now, like it makes a difference. Like you can leave all your troubles in the dust. But flying has always given you a lot of time to think, so rather than let yourself slip back to Dabi, you latch onto the concept of your judgement day and spend the rest of your lonely journey home wondering if it'll ever come. You've managed to avoid it so far—because you're so good at dodging responsibility, aren't you—but you can't get away with it forever. Your tallies keep growing, building. What happens when they creep outside the bounds of your poster?

What then?

You hide your mouth in your collar and laugh to yourself, exasperated.

And in the midst of those empty miles, you start thinking about something you'd learned as a kid.

It was a chapter in the *World History* textbook the commission gifted to you, when they were still trying to gain your favor and make you feel like you were special in a good way. You weren't allowed to go to school quite yet—you weren't leashed—but what you were allowed was a library of books to keep you occupied while you were locked in your room recovering from what they'd done to you. How they'd begun to mold you. And that process differed day to day, but the end results always left you weak and hungry for distraction.

So you'd opened that big book for the first time and turned the pages with your feathers, learning about the origins of the world.

Half the time you couldn't even pronounce the names of the civilizations, but even then you wanted to know everything about them because of how strange and distant it all was to you. No mention of quirks. No such thing as heroes or villains, or at least as you know them today. It was somewhere to escape to, your little fairy tale world.

And when you got to the section about ancient Egypt—you found your favorite story. It made your eyes grow big and wide, reading about the gods and goddesses that captivated you in an instant when you saw that one of them had wings, and another was half-falcon, and you were so desperate for anything under the sun that felt familiar to you.

So you drank it down.

You read it over and over and over.

You'd learned—under your covers, with a flashlight held by your feathers—about the trials Egyptians believed they'd go through to reach the afterlife. After dying. It was a concept that stuck with you. How they'd weigh their heart against a feather on a scale to see how light it was, and if it was just light enough, they'd know they lived a good life. That they were a good person.

(Good enough, anyway.)

But if they had a heavy heart, one filled to the brim with wrongs, they'd be eaten.

And that scared you as a kid. Fucking *terrified* you—so much so that you latched onto the ghostly image of a scale and never let go of it. You didn't want to be eaten, and you still don't. But you can feel how heavy your heart is, constantly, sitting there in your chest like a bomb, and you don't know if it's even possible to undo the damage you've done to it.

You wonder if the only recourse you have is to give yourself up for consumption.

You wonder if your judgement day is *today*, because you can't stand it, how badly you need someone to *know* -

Your breath suddenly hitches in your throat and doesn't come back to you. You don't know what's happening. All you understand is that you need to get out of the air before you suffocate, so you make a split-second decision, right then, and it's the first one that feels like your own in a very long time.

Your feet hit something solid. You're digging in your pocket for your phone before you even have a face or a name in mind, but it's easy enough once you scroll down your contacts. It's not like you've ever had a long list of people you could rely on.

Not the kind that would shake you by your ankles, anyway.

He answers on the second ring, because it's midnight and the only calls coming in are bound to be important ones. Not because it's you.

"Hello?"

You don't know why it strikes you like it does. You've heard Endeavor's voice since you were seven years old—your little palms and forehead pressed against an old T.V. screen, static on your skin—it should be nothing but familiar to you. So why are you scared to hold the phone against your ear? Why are your fucking hands shaking?

Why is everything working against you?

"Hawks?" He sounds so alert, when you don't answer. "What's wrong?"

You freeze up, leaning against the back-lit billboard you'd landed on so you could talk to him without the wind in your ears. It hums with electricity while you think, and you take a deep breath so he at least knows you're there, and doesn't do something drastic in the interim.

You don't even know where to begin.

What's wrong with you? So many things are wrong with you, you're fucking infested with everything that's *wrong* with you, coming up with fistful after fistful of it, and it won't stop repopulating, cycling through you. You want to tell him about your masks, your lies, all your tallies. You want to tell him about his son.

But you know you can't do any of it.

The only way you're gonna talk to him now is if you compromise. He doesn't deserve to be straight-up lied to—you know that. But you're so sick of yourself that you can't even speak half-truths without feeling the bile rise, because it's Endeavor you'd be telling them to. Your *hero*. The only man you can still look up to in the whole, fucked-up world; then, now, always. You owe him more than he'll ever understand.

So you tilt your head back and you compromise.

You tell him, "I'm a bad person, Endeavor-san."

He doesn't respond right away. You wonder if you've already scared him off; if he doesn't want to deal with you. You wouldn't blame him, if he didn't.

But then Endeavor wonders, "Why do you say that?"

You laugh at the earnestness in his question. A thousand reasons bubble up in your throat and pop on your teeth when you bite them back.

"You trust me?" You don't pause long enough for him to answer. "Course you do, right? So there it is. I just wanted to be the one to tell you, is all."

Your voice cracks at the end.

(There's no way he doesn't hear it.)

Endeavor is silent for a long time. For so long that your breathing slows, and you slide down the billboard and onto the metal grate, sitting with your knees knocked together. You want to curl your arms and wings around them and hold yourself like you'd do as a kid when things overwhelmed you. When you wanted to disappear. You wish he'd just shake you by your ankles already, without mercy, without letting you explain, because maybe then you'd be rattled enough to finally own up to everything you've done.

But he's not the one fit to punish you. You know it in your heart. You've known it all along.

Endeavor clears his throat in your ear, while you're still clutching your knees, holding your breath.

"On what scale?"

You freeze, pulling the phone back to blink. You close and open your mouth at least three separate times before something finally manages to come out of it. "I—"

And you stutter, too.

You never *stutter*.

"I don't know," you say, grasping for anything but the sick little game you play because you're not about to open up your whole, twisted mind to him.

You settle for, "The hero scale."

"I don't believe that," Endeavor huffs. "You told me you never cared where you stood with the others, with your rank. All of a sudden you care now?"

You dig your nails into your palm.

You should've known he wouldn't take it at face value.

He's never been the kind of person to just blindly accept the state of things. It was foolish to think he would listen to you—whatever your guilty conscience just made you blurt to him over the phone, at fucking midnight—because all you've really done is pique his interest in understanding you better. And he's *done* that before. He's dissected you. Dissected the way you communicate with him. Endeavor knows exactly what it sounds like when you're asking him to help you while your lips are sewn shut.

And you sound a little like that right now, don't you?

But he's defending you.

He thinks you're just being ridiculous, and you can't stand it, seeing how your hero believes in you. God, how Endeavor *trusts* you. Your chest tightens like it's made of one, long, convoluted knot. It's just another form of dishonesty to sit here and let him operate under the assumption that you're innocent, or that you ever have been.

So you try your hardest to tell him—without really telling him.

“I shouldn’t be up there next to you.”

“Ah,” he hums, like it all makes sense. “So you’re scaling yourself against me.”

And suddenly you feel like he’s stolen the breath from your fucking lungs—which on a good day takes something earth-shattering, but you’re already half-shattered as it is.

Now you curl your wings around your knees like you wanted to before. You feel small, and seen, and you know there’s nothing you can say to refute him on this.

Because he’s right.

“You’re a bad person?” Endeavor continues, without any prompting. “They make *good* heroes, if they want to be a good one. You know why? Because they have something to prove, they’re the ones putting their blood, sweat and tears into earning their title instead of acting like they already have,” he finishes with a long exhale. You think there has to be more. Surely there’s an exception or a condemnation somewhere in what he’s saying, but he adds nothing else, just waits for you.

You squeeze yourself tightly in a ball.

The way he talks about it makes you wonder if it’s not the first time he’s considered it; being a good person, a good hero. You wonder if maybe Endeavor has his own scale that he battles with. But even if he does surely it’s not anything compared to yours, the way you desperately weigh yourself against it, ongoing, every day of your life spent trying to strike a balance somewhere in the chaos.

You don’t know what to say to him, and you’re quiet for too long. Eventually, Endeavor isn’t so patient with you.

“You hear me, boy?”

You flinch, feeling your cheeks grow warm. Your neck. All of a sudden you’re thankful that you’d only called him on the phone, instead of doing something stupid like flying to him.

“Yeah,” you say, quietly. “I hear you.”

“Good,” he replies.

You think it’s genuine.

You hang up with a short farewell, before you go and say something ridiculous to him. He doesn’t ask you if you’re okay, before letting you off, but it’s not like you’d know how to reply to that any more than you did when he asked what was wrong with you.

And you fly the rest of the way home, mulling over what he’d said.

Weighing it.

When you slip through your window and sit down on your mattress, you finally peel off your shirt so you won't smell like smoke, anymore. You run your hands through your hair afterward, sighing. But you aren't done yet. You don't want to fall asleep and dream and wake up in the middle of the night, feeling like you're missing something, like you always do. Instead you turn and face the spot where your poster hangs on the wall.

The man you hide all your tallies behind.

Which you leave uncovered, instead of subjecting yourself to.

Your eyes wander down to the empty space beneath the poster, and you start thinking. About how you keep your whole room white walls and bare necessities and how that fact never bothered you before, but all you can focus on now is your desire to fill it. To fight for your space. To make it into something that reminds you what it feels like to be *good*, again.

You know who you are—who you want to be—and you're so fucking sick of letting the people you wear your masks for think they can decide it for you.

And you know now, what you wanna do.

(You'll thank Endeavor later.)

So you close your eyes.

You think back to the very first time your scale tipped in the right direction—before you even knew there was a scale in the first place. It was still balanced back then. Everything was. You sink down into your mattress and let yourself miss that distinct feeling of peace.

And you see it.

The memory is blurry, but you don't need every detail of it. Just the highlights. You lie there and watch the accident play out in your head, behind your eyelids, the way you remember it. How your feathers acted on their own accord and sought the people screaming for a hero.

But you *weren't* one. You were just a kid still figuring out how your wings worked when you were thrust into the limelight, wide-eyed, hero plush hanging from your hands, and that day made damned sure the commission would be able to find you and turn you into something ugly and twisted and beautiful.

And isn't it sad, how you can't even do so much as estimate the number of people you'd saved, while the people you've hurt live in your heart keeping the *lub* and *dub* of every beat hostage.

But you can try, can't you?

You think to yourself—you want to start a new tally. Something you should've been keeping track of all along.

You open your eyes.

One, you start to count, aimlessly. And nothing breathtaking happens when you say it—not like you wanted it to—but you're not so detached that you can't understand how important it is to the piece of you that wants to be good. To the piece of your hero that thinks you should be. You feel a mark drag down your very bones.

Because you saved them.

Two.

You saved them.

Three

End Notes

:^)

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