

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

A/N: Moving right along~

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Izuku had to admit, he was a little bit concerned about how exactly Courtney was going to react to the revelations of that evening. Her spying on them having sex was one thing... but Malevola confessing the truth about how she joined the Phoenix Program within the invisible woman's hearing hadn't been in Izuku's projections.

The red-skinned heteromorph was certainly quite the wildcard, that's for sure. But then, so was Courtney. She'd already 'investigated' Izuku to the point that she'd found out he was Vigil. What would she do now that she'd learned she wasn't Shroud's only plant in the Phoenix Program?

Paradoxically, the answer was both a whole lot... and not much at all. Because Courtney had seemed to decide that it was now her duty to watch *everyone* in the Phoenix Program for any signs of disloyalty.

She'd taken to using her Quirk, enhanced as it was by Izuku-as-Shroud, to start spying on everybody every chance she got. She was watching her fellow heroines like a hawk, following a different one around each day and clearly trying to figure out if any of them were like her and Malevola... that is, spies for Shroud and the Red Ring.

Of course, the main problem with this plan was simple... none of the members of the Phoenix Program had been called in by Shroud yet. Nor would they be at a moment when Courtney was spying on them, not if Izuku had anything to say about it. Her investigations weren't going to turn up anything substantial... and so long as she wasn't caught stalking her teammates, her actions were relatively harmless.

More so since he could effectively curtail a lot of Courtney's spying efforts by simply arranging for more training sessions with her. The more he exhausted her in the ring, the harder it was for her to spend time stalking everyone else. All in all, it was about the best Izuku could have hoped for from the unintended situation.

Of course, there was also the other side of things... Courtney had definitely taken to looking at him differently ever since she watched him and Mei fuck Malevola together. It was like she was seeing him for the first time. Sort of like the way things had changed when she'd found out he was actually Vigil, but in a different way.

Izuku didn't pay it much mind though... instead, he was more focused on the present... and certain opportunities at play.

See, he'd been listening in the other week when the suits at the head of the Hero Commission got together for their little meeting to discuss him and his actions. The topics of discussion had literally all been about him, even if they didn't know it. From the obvious, aka Shroud and the Red Ring, to the less obvious, such as PDN, the Phoenix Program... and Mirko the Rabbit Hero.

After all, Izuku had plans for Mirko. Plans that the Hero Commission were going to unwittingly help him with... by driving the Rabbit Hero right into his arms. Or rather, right into PDN's arms.

But first, he had to tarnish the heroine a bit more. Her defeat at his hands the other week at the warehouse hadn't been enough, according to the Hero Commission. She was 'on thin ice', but otherwise they didn't feel they could move against her yet. And Izuku needed them to move against her. He needed them to overstep and overreach.

And so, Izuku is once again wearing the attire of Shroud, including the skull mask over his face. It's late at night and nothing much is happening... in fact, he's not doing a single thing when Mirko's seemingly chaotic 'patrol' pattern leads to her landing on the roof right in front of him.

The Rabbit Hero freezes, having clearly not clocked him in the slightest. But to be fair, Izuku had been utilizing a number of stealth-based Quirks until she was already in the air and about to land.

Red eyes widening, Mirko stares at him... and he stares back, though his mask prevents him from offering her a provocative grin. Not that he really needs it... she almost immediately drops into a fighting stance, growling.

“Shroud! What the fuck is this?! An ambush?!”

Letting out a robotic chuckle, Izuku shakes his head.

“Ambush? No... this is an offer, Mirko.”

The Rabbit Hero blinks at him, before furrowing her brow in consternation.

“An offer? What the fuck are you talking about? Like I would ever take an offer from a shitty villain like you.”

Izuku just shrugs, playing up his role a bit.

“You might if it was the only choice you had. And very soon, it might very well be exactly that.”

Before she can reply, he pulls a recorder out of his pocket. Mirko tenses up, perhaps expecting a weapon... but Izuku just clicks it on. The voices of the higher ups at the Hero Commission begin to play and her eyes fixate on the recorded, narrowing into slits as her big rabbit ears twitch.

“That’s...”

Hah. They tried so hard to hide their identities ever since Nagant did what she did all those years ago... but they were still members of the Hero Commission, all of them pretending to be cogs in the machine. And of course someone with enhanced hearing like the heteromorph standing across from him would immediately recognize some of the voices on the recording.

It plays out in full; nothing held back from their discussion about Mirko specifically. When that part is done, Shroud clicks off the recorder and tilts his head to the side.

“They’re just looking for a reason, Mirko. When they have it, they’re going to do everything they can to restrain you. I’m offering you freedom here and now... along with a hefty signing bonus for jumping ship before you have no other choice.”

Mirko’s jaw works, her anger palpable as her hands curl into fists and shake at her sides. She glares at the recorder in his grasp, clearly wanting nothing more than to be able to reach through it and strangle those who had been speaking about her like she was just an irritant who needed to be dealt with.

“A signing bonus. What does that even mean?”

“Simple enough. I can make you stronger, Mirko. I can make you more powerful than you could ever imagine. You would be better than all of them. All those hypocritical Pro Heroes... you would be able to show them, once and for all, what they really are.”

Frowning, Mirko tilts her head to the side.

“And what exactly are they?”

“Frauds. Liars. Scam Artists. They dress it up nicely, but there are vanishingly few true heroes these days. All because of the Hero Commission’s efforts, of course. They would rather that someone like All Might never rise up again... it makes it harder for them to control you all.”

Mirko twitches and amusingly, Izuku can tell she’s actually considering it. But after a long moment... she scowls and shakes her head.

“No. I’m taking you in here and now, Shroud.”

“You would do their bidding then? Even knowing what they think of you?”

That draws a bark of laughter from the Rabbit Hero.

“You think I didn’t already know the Hero Commission hates my guts? You think I care about that shit? I’m not ‘doing their bidding’ dumbass... I’m doing what’s right! And what’s right is kicking your ass and putting you in Tartarus where you belong!”

With that, she launches herself forward, one of her powerful legs snapping up and a foot aimed for his face. Izuku grabs her foot before it can hit and slams it down into the roof beneath them, causing said roof to crater. But Mirko is of a one track mind now and presses the attack anyways, going for a punch that Izuku easily deflects.

“What makes you think tonight will be any different than last time, Mirko?”

“I know all of your tricks now, Shroud! This time will be different!”

Hm, was she just that deep in self-denial? Or was she simply that overconfident? Either way, this time isn’t really any different from the last. Izuku still dominates the fight. He just dominates it in another way. After all, this was all part of the plan.

He never expected Mirko to actually join him or Red Ring. If she had... well, Izuku could probably have made it work with his plans, but it certainly would have been a shock, almost as shocking as Malevola spilling the beans to him and Mei while Courtney was spying on them.

But no, unlike Malevola, Mirko is entirely predictable... at least in this case. She might not be the perfect hero; she might not have a good relationship with the Hero Commission or indeed any other Hero Agency... but she was still a hero at the end of the day. She wasn’t going to turn around and give in to villainy, no matter what he showed her or told her.

Izuku appreciated that sort of unbending moral fiber. For all that Mirko loved a good fight, she simply wasn't the type of woman who would seek that fight out to the detriment of innocents. At least... not under normal circumstances.

Which is why Izuku has to make it happen. Every blow Mirko throws at him, every strike she sends his way, has enough power behind it to pulverize concrete and shatter stone. And that's exactly what Izuku uses it for. He deflects her every attack... into their surroundings.

Even though he could have ended the fight instantly, he doesn't, instead making it seem like Mirko has him on the backfoot and is actually pressing him. And of course, even if some small voice in the back of her mind might be telling her something is wrong, Mirko's fighting instincts are telling her that she has to keep going, that she has to defeat him.

Alas... in trying to defeat him, Mirko is continually breaking everything around them. Until the roof is covered in broken AC units and duct work, and the ground itself is cracked and shattered and broken in a dozen places. The building shakes violently with every forceful blow that Izuku directs down into it and he can hear everyone who lives in it quickly evacuating.

No children. No elderly. He'd made sure of that when he picked this spot for the fight. As the minutes go by and Mirko gets more and more frustrated, he feels as everyone manages to make it out of the building. And then he hears it in the distance... sirens signaling that first responders are on their way.

The moment Mirko's ears twitch, a sign that she's hearing the same thing, Izuku ends it. Before she can fully realize what he's had her do, before she can process what's happening, Izuku raises his own foot... and stomps at exactly the right spot in the roof. And the entire building comes down under them.

They fall together, with Izuku keeping Mirko focused on the fight by battling her midair. Her movements become a bit desperate as she starts to realize what's happening. Until finally, they both land amidst the rubble. An entire apartment building... destroyed in about fifteen minutes.

It would be a lie to say Izuku couldn't have done it without Mirko's help. But then, that's sort of the point of all of this. One great big lie. Mirko stops, panting heavily as she stares at the destruction they've wrought together, the sirens getting louder in the distance.

Izuku straightens up... and lets out another robotic chuckle as he slowly shakes his head.

“Oh dear. Look at what you've done now, Mirko.”

Looking around pointedly, he turns back to her after a moment, pretending to relish the dismayed look on her face.

“Hm... would you call this a ‘misstep’, do you think? A ‘mistake’? I think we both know that *they* certainly will.”

Indeed, they both knew Mirko was screwed on this one. He hadn't even been doing anything, after all. She'd been the one to initiate hostilities in a residential area... and then she destroyed the residence of about a hundred people trying to capture him. And that last bit was the key part... trying.

“Good luck.”

If Mirko had actually managed to defeat and apprehend him, then all would have probably been forgiven. But Izuku isn't about to let that happen, obviously. And so he vanishes right then and there, leaving Mirko standing along amidst the rubble as the first responders start to pull up.

The ball was in the Hero Commission's court now. Fortunately, Izuku already knew they would screw it up... and drive Mirko right into his waiting hands.

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