

Bakugou: No, Kirishima. We don't have the time for that... And we can't risk it. **(muttering the next line)** of course the bastard has to be located in some damn city.. Makes everything so much harder.

Kirishima: (disappointed noise)

Bakugou: (huffs) I'll make it up to you, so don't pout. Also...Traveler I think you should give the gem to Shitty Scales while we're in there.

Kirishima: (surprised) uh? M-me? Are you sure?

Bakugou: (huff) listen, if shit goes down, *you're* the only one here with wings. You might be too low on mana to fully transform, but you can still fly yourself out.. and that's what matters. If we get captured, you can make a getaway.. And then you can come back for us later.

Kirishima: Yeah, I guess you're right... Would...you be okay with that Traveler? I promise when we leave I'll give it right back! You can trust me with it, promise.

(shuffling as the listener takes off their satchel and hands it to Kirishima)

Kirishima: Alright, I'll just put this satchel on for now... There we go.

Bakugou: (soft huff) Alright..We're at the south entrance...we gotta get to the west side if we wanna find the weirdo. **(annoyed huff)** Why couldn't this asshole live in a tower in the woods somewhere like a normal sorcerer?

Kirishima: (laugh, admonishing) Bakugou...not all of them live in towers. That's like saying all dragons sleep on big piles of gold!

Bakugou: Whatever... We're almost to the gate. If either of you mess this up, so help me.. Just let me do the talking. I ain't in the mood to be locked up in some cramped cell in a filthy dungeon.

Kirishima: Yes, sir!

Gate Guard: Next in line! How many in your party?

Bakugou: Three.

Gate Guard: (deadpan) Twelve copper. The Dragon costs extra. Since you don't have a citizen pass, I'm required to inform you that transformation within city walls is strictly prohibited. You transform, the Hunter's guild will be dispatched and you will be detained by any means necessary, including but not limited to tranquilization and restraints by magical and mundane means. You will be held responsible for any and all collateral damage resulting in your transformation and you will be banned from the city for up to a year depending on said damage.

Kirishima: Uh.. R-right! understood-

Bakugou: Charging him extra just for his species? **(scoffs)** .. You really think he's some idiot? He ain't gonna transform-

Kirishima: (Interrupting nervously) Haha..! Don't worry! That's completely understandable! So, um.. Twelve copper, you said?

Bakugou: (A huff, and a low growl, fishes for the coins) .. Here.

(coins being handed over, sound of stamp hitting paper three times)

Gate Guard: ...Here you go. Three passes, keep these on you at all times. They expire once you leave the city. If you wish to re-enter you'll have to pay your fee again.

Bakugou: Hmph, sure. Don't plan on stayin' in this place for long anyway. Let's go, you two.

Kirishima: (evenly) Thanks mister.

Gate Guard: (ignoring Kirishima) Next in line!

(walking)

Kirishima: (amused) and what the hell was *that* all about huh? 'Let me do all the talking' huh? Yeah, I think you almost did a little too much talking! Haha!

Bakugou: (a bit embarrassed) nnngh- Shut up! **(Annoyed huff)** .. What's that smug look for Traveler? You got somethin' to say?

Kirishima: (Laughs, amused)

As we walked through the gates, I could feel the guards watching us. The gem probably triggered the ward, but.. It seemed they weren't aware of it yet. I hurried the three of us through, and into the bustling crowds of the city as quickly as I could. Those stares felt uncomfortable... and I could tell the both of you were feeling it as well.

Despite the lingering gazes, the city was pretty damn impressive. The streets were clean, if not crowded on both sides with booths from merchants. Everywhere we looked, there was someone calling for customers to check out their wares. Most of it was food, which of course had Kirishima drooling and after he begged and whined, we stopped for a quick bite. As we ate, we looked around, taking in the sights. Along with the food merchants, there were also ones selling jewelry, supplies, and some weapon merchants.. There was even a booth where the Hunter's guild would buy game and felled monsters.

The buildings were packed tightly together with small alleys between them that connected the busy streets together. They were different from Kanporo, the buildings having small balconies and shutters on the windows. Their roofs were thatched and well maintained. Some of them even had flowers and herbs growing along them. The roads were paved with smooth cobblestone, carts coming and going through them nonstop. We even saw a few noble carriages making their way towards the North end of the city, trimmed in gold and pulled by shiny white stallions with their heads held high.

Small pennant flags criss-crossed above the street, strung between the buildings, the fabric flapping in the breeze, magic shimmering across them as they moved, keeping any bad smells from below away from the open windows of the people above. It was a trade city for damn sure.

I could tell the two of you wanted to gawk at everything, but we didn't have the time. We'd wasted enough of it by stopping for food and we needed to get to the west side of the city quickly. There were too many eyes on us, and they were only growing in number as we worked our way through towards the western side of the city. That gem needed to be nullified, and fast.

The western side was devoid of any merchants, the roads less well-kept, the smell a bit... (disgusted) stronger. The homes looked shabbier too, some of them having broken windows and poorly repaired doors. We even hustled past one that was nothing but a burned out shell. It seemed we were starting to worm our way out of those guards' strict gazes, at least for now.

Bakugou: (low growl) Damn it. This way..I think if we get down this alley, we'll be out of their sight for a bit. Those guards are makin' me nervous and I don't like it.

Kirishima: (small nervous noises) Are you sure we're going the right way Bakugou?

Bakugou: (huffs) Yeah I'm sure. I know my directions, Shitty Scales. We're headed to the west.. just stay close.

Kirishima: (affirmative noise) Here Traveler..I've gotcha. This place is starting to look kinda unsafe..so just hold my hand okay? I.. Think I just saw a secret entrance to a thieves guild...

Bakugou: (huffs) Ignore it. Just means we're on the right track... Now c'mon. Keep your head down and your eyes out for that sorcerer. Worse comes to worse, might have to resort to bribin' the answer out of someone here. This place looks like somewhere money gets you answers.

(they walk for a bit through the streets)

Guard: (far away) someone saw them come down this way. Spread out! You four, go that way. Lieutenant, take your men and head down toward the western gate. You lot with me. We'll find them sooner or later.

Bakugou: Shit. thought we had more time. Those bastards figured it out quick, huh... **(Annoyed sigh, stern orders but keeps his voice down)** Here, you two go ahead of me, down that alleyway, go!

Kirishima: C'mon Traveler, this way...watch your step! Those puddles are probably not just water...ew..

(hurrying steps, after a moment, there's a cat noise, bell jingling as the cat lands in front of them)

Bakugou: (startled grunt, annoyed exhale) Damned furball, scared the shit outta me! I almost blasted you, I hope you know that!

(pause)

Kirishima: Yeah, like Traveler said! Don't yell at the poor cat, Katsuki..! They're just checking in on us I think, since we're new faces around here. **(thoughtful)** I think I might be able to get some help from our fuzzy friend here...Gimmie a sec!

Bakugou: You gotta be kidding me. You speak *cat*?

Kirishima: Well.. Sorta. It's more so that I can use a special type of magic that allows me to communicate with them! Dragons learn it at an early age, at least...my flight does. Dunno about the others. Fae and elves can too! It's pretty handy!

Bakugou: ... (under his breath, irritated) Gods, give me a break.

(Footsteps as he approaches the cat)

Kirishima: (clears his throat, gently) Hey there, my name's Kirishima Eijiro and these are my companions... We're looking for the guy with violet hair who feeds you and your friends? He has tired eyes and wears a mask... We don't mean him any harm, of course...! Y'see..someone told us he could help us with a magical artifact, and.. Well. We really could use his help.. And.. it's a little bit dire. Do you know where we could find him?

(affirmative cat noise, another meow, jingles as the cat moves away)

Kirishima: Ah...! Of course! Thank you so much!

Bakugou: What the hell did it say?

Kirishima: (happy) She said she knows who we're talking about and to follow her! C'mon! I don't think we have much of a choice...

Bakugou: (sigh) ... I can hear more guards so... It better know where it's- ... *she's* going. Keep your voices low and walk softly.

Kirishima: (whispering) Gotcha!

(footsteps and city ambience as they follow the cat for a bit.)

Kirishima: (whispering) Huh? Oh! Haha, yeah Traveller! Cats are very magical creatures. You can communicate with them if you learn the magic to do so~! They're very smart too.. More than most folk give them credit for.

Bakugou: (huffs, whispers) Quit yapping. The last thing we need is for those damn guards to come down this alleyway. Shut up and focus on following the furball.

Kirishima: (whispering) Katsuki, be *polite*...she's showing us the way, don't call her a furball! And I'm not *yapping*, Traveler asked me a question!

(the sound of someone tripping over something)

Bakugou: (Trips on garbage a bit, keeping his voice low) Shit!

Guard: Huh? What was that? You! Go check out that noise!

Other Guard: Yes sir!

Kirishima: (whispered, urgent) Quick! Over here! Get down!

Bakugou: (whispered back, annoyed) I got it, Traveller, here under my cape! And keep quiet..

(shuffling as the trio quickly hide, footsteps as the guard comes to check.)

Other Guard: (firm) If anyone's there, I order you to show yourself!

(cat jumps on crate and meows loudly)

Other Guard: (startles, exhales, calls back) Sir! It was just a stray cat! **(lower volume, hesitant)**
Uh...apologies for the intrusion, kitty.

(cat meow)

Guard: Keep searching. The western district isn't *that* big. We'll find them eventually!

Other Guard: Yes sir!

(footsteps as he leaves, cat purring softly)

Kirishima: (gushing, but keeps his voice down a bit) Hnnn- thank you so much Kitty..! Could.. Could I know your name..?

(cat trill)

Kirishima: Oh! Thank you, Miss Rilancia (Ree-lahn-ee-ah) You really saved our tails.

Bakugou: (huff) ... Doubt you can understand me, fuzzball.. But thanks.

(Soft cat sound, before it jumps down and starts leading them again)

Kirishima: Heh.. Let's keep following our little guide.

Bakugou: Mm.

(They keep walking in silence a moment)

Bakugou: .. Glad that guard was magically inept. He got close to us, but he didn't even sense the magic coming from the gem.. Thank the gods.

Kirishima: Yeah.... We got lucky.

(cat makes a trill sound and stops at a thin little crevice in the alleyway, at the end of it, a door covered in ivy)

Kirishima: Woah... This must be it. Ah.. Little Rilancia really helped us out, that door is so tucked away and covered in ivy, we would have walked right by it!

Bakugou: (thoughtful noise) Yeah, I think it has a glamor spell on it too. Whoever this guy is, he's really good at making sure he's hard to find.

(cat meows, small magical noise, door opens)

Kirishima: (awed) Whoa! I guess the door's enchanted for her? That's amazing...

Bakugou: No use standin' out here, wasting time...I'll go first...

Kirishima: We're right behind you!

(Footsteps as Bakugou enters, there's the slight sound of bubbling, fireplace ambience, purrs from cats, footsteps as the traveler and Kirishima enter)

Bakugou: ... (softly) Alright, come in you two. Stay close to me.

Kirishima: Woah...

Stepping in through the doorway, I saw that no one was around... Except for about a dozen stray cats lazing around the place, that regarded us with curious gazes from their various perches.

It looked almost like an alchemist's lab more than a sorcerer's lair. Towards the back was a counter, obviously where the weirdo would handle clients with a curtained doorway to the right of it. Behind the counter were shelves lined with bottles and jars of all kinds. Some held specimens, others seemed to hold different liquids that seethed and pressed against its container. A few of the bottles glittered and gave off light...others still seemed to boil and freeze. I think one was a love potion, glowing bright pink and full of heart shaped bubbles.

Bookshelves were packed tightly into the space, full of tomes and artifacts... Any spare bit of wall was covered with a silk tapestry or some kind of trinket or bauble. While it was cluttered, the place was spotless, not a strand of fur or speck of dust anywhere and despite the many cats, the room smelled faintly of Tumssole, Elf-leaf and Star Pine sap. The floor was dark well polished hardwood, covered with fine rugs, and I could even see some etchings of spell runes into them.

Magic was so thick in the air I could almost taste it, amulets and ward stones hung all over the place, twinkling in the light of a fireplace that gave off no heat. Our feline guide made her way to the counter and hopped up onto it, settling herself into a woven basket overflowing with plush fabrics. With one paw, she tapped a crystal pyramid next to her bed and meowed loudly.

The crystal gave off a bell-like tone...and we heard footsteps moving overhead. It wasn't long before the man we were looking for pushed his way through the curtain and regarded us with those tired eyes we heard about. His hair was indeed violet, messy and partially hidden by the hood of his cloak, a mantle of purple feathers rested on his shoulders and a mask concealed the lower half of his face. An amulet around his neck caught the light as he entered, getting Kirishima's attention for a moment.

The man seemed...confused at our presence, but he quickly shook it off as he made his way behind the counter and spoke.

Shinsou: (yawn, his voice monotone and tired) ... mn. What can I do for you, my unexpected guests?

Kirishima: ...(Slightly concerned noise) ah...

Bakugou: We're here 'cause we need your magic. We were told you could nullify magical auras, can you?

Shinsou: .. Ah? Indeed I can...for the right price. Must be something powerful.. I can already feel whatever it is from here.

Bakugou: Tch.. Yeah, why do you think we need it nullified? .. **(huff)** It's a gem. You'll get paid extra coin if you keep your questions to yourself. Kirishima, give me that satchel.

Kirishima: **(uneasy)** .. Um. M-maybe we shouldn't-

(pause)

Kirishima: I know Traveler but I- .. S-something's...

Bakugou: **(Snarls impatiently)** Shitty Scales! We came all the way into this damn city to get this done, *hand it over.*

Kirishima: **(slight flinch at Bakugou's harshness)** ! ... Right. Yeah.. uh.. Here. **(Shuffling as he slips it off and hands it over to Bakugou)** ...

Bakugou: **(huff)** Where the hell is it?...**(rummaging for couple second, grumpy grumbles)**

Shinsou: **(deadpan)** I do have other appointments you know, so I'd appreciate you giving it to me sometime today.

Bakugou: **(snaps)** Gimme a damn second you magic bastard!

Shinsou: **(Unimpressed)** Well aren't you friendly, that's some way to talk to someone who's helping you. I have a name you know.

Bakugou: Like that even matters. We aint friends.

Shinsou: Shinsou. And you three are?

Bakugou: **(Gritted teeth)** Like I said. It. doesn't. *matter.*

Shinsou: **(Deep sigh)** .. Well then. I suppose you're not the first clients to prefer anonymity. **(a bit amused)** Seems you're well aware to not give your names to a Fae. Pity.

Kirishima: **(uncomfortable noise)**

(Cat meows, purrs)

Shinsou: Hm. Well if Rila (Ree-lah) says you're fine, I'll let it slide for now...but just know my patience does have a limit. There's a fee for rude customers...so keep that in mind.

Bakugou: **(irritated scoff)** Everyone around here speaks with goddamn strays huh?

Shinsou: Some just don't have the talent I suppose.

Bakugou: .. Ah? ... Tch. Not everyone needs such a useless skill.

(pause)

Shinsou: I appreciate your apology, Traveler. **(amused chuckle, playfully in Bakugou's voice)** You should look into better company. Ruffians like me can lead to trouble you know?

Kirishima: (small startled noise) That's..

Bakugou: (Shocked) Ngh-! What the hell?! Don't use my damn voice!

(pause)

Shinsou: (Soft chuckle) Right.. My *apologies*. If you say he isn't a ruffian, I'll have to take you at your word traveler. **(yawn)** Mind handing over the magical item now? Or are you simply going to waste more of my time?

Bakugou: Yeah, yeah... **(Angry huff as he digs into the satchel)** Traveler, you have too much shit in your bag....THERE it is..

Kirishima: (under his breath, quickly) Uh- K..Katsuki! Lets not.. Give him the book. Just the gem... ahha.. Wouldn't want to overwhelm him with all that stuff you're handing over..!

Bakugou: (realizes) .. nn. Right. Yeah... uh. Let me just.. **(soft grunt as he pulls it from the socket in the pages)** Here. Take the stupid thing and fix it.

Shinsou: (soft breath as he sees the gem, almost in awe) Thanks.

Kirishima: (Soft uneasy sound, quietly) Just... hurry..! Haha.. If you can. We're in a bit of a rush.....

Shinsou: (ignores Kirishima's words, in awe of the gem he was handed) ... How on Solterra did you get your hands on this?

Bakugou: ... (uneasy) .. I told you to keep your questions to yourself, *Fae*.

Shinsou: (pause for a moment, amused huff through his nose) .. Of course. **(he's silent a moment, looking the gem over)**

Bakugou: You just gonna keep staring at it or are you gonna nullify it?

Shinsou: ... Twenty gold, and I'll do it.

Bakugou: Ah..?! Twenty- You have some nerve.

Shinsou: The magic emanating from this artifact will take me a lot of time and mana to nullify for even just a small amount of time. Twenty gold covers my work and the mana gems I'll have to use if you want the

spellwork to be long lasting. Or~ You can take your companion and your crimson and go talk to the guards. You *could* also wait for my mentor to return and ask him...and he'll charge you twice the price, *barbarian*.

Bakugou: (Angered scoff) Oh.. Is that how you're gonna play?! **(growl)**

(A subtle sparkling sound starts through Bakugou's arguing)

Gem: Traveler.... Be weary. There is an illusion spell at play....

Bakugou: (growls) Listen here, we came all the way into this stupid ass city to get this stupid gem nullified! We-

(pause as the listener tries to cut in)

Bakugou: (addresses them with huff) One second Traveler- **(continues to rant at Shinsou)** We risked our asses, sneaking around guards so we don't end up getting hauled off to some dungeon! I really, really don't appreciate you tugging our chains right now, because *frankly*, you have no gods-damned idea what we've been through just to get *here*! I suggest you cut out that snarky attitude, take the gold I give you, and do your job,- **(falters a bit, seeing what's happening)** ah- **(angrily, soft)** y-you....

Kirishima: (trying to interrupt Bakugou through his arguing) ... K.. Katsuki... H-hey... Katsuki..! He's... He's.. an ebon..?! **(Worried, soft)** Gods, I knew I had a bad feeling..!

Shinsou: (startled, softly) What the...

Bakugou: (Taken aback) .. H... Hey... **(nervous growl)** Give me that gem back.. Right now!

Kirishima: (dragon growl) Traveler...get back! I *knew* your magic felt familiar! You're no *Fae*!

Bakugou: Ngh- Easy, Red-!

Shinsou: (Soft, in shock) My glamour spell wore off... H.. How on Solterra... **(Soft realization)** The gem...

Kirishima: (snarls as he lunges)

Bakugou: (Grunt as he's pushed in the tussle) ...! Oi..! Eijirou!

(loud thump as Kirishima pounces Shinsou and pins him down, there's growling and snarling as the dragons tussle each other, potions breaking, cats shrieking and scattering)

Bakugou: H-... HEY..! Ngh- NO! Traveler, stay back-! The last thing you wanna do is get in the middle of a dragon fight-! **(Huff)** EIJIROU!

(The tussling finally comes to an end with a loud THUMP, as Kirishima pins Shinsou to the floor, his teeth around his throat, DEEP dragon growling)

Shinsou: G-gods..! Get your teeth.. Off of my damn throat, Crimson...! ..**(pained noise, trying to talk with Kirishima's maw around his neck)** G-give a moment to *explain*! It's not what you think! *I'M* not.. What you think..!

Bakugou: (snarl) .. Eijirou. Keep him pinned.. Damn ebon... *Give me that. (He yanks the gem from Shinsou's hands with a shaky huff)* ... I got the gem. Traveler, hold onto this and stand behind me.

Kirishima: (Muffled snarls, his teeth still latched)

Shinsou: (pained noise) Barbarian! Get him off me, so I can *explain!*

Bakugou: Ha! Fat chance-... Nn... (trails off into silence as Shinsou's magic takes hold)

Shinsou: (still pinned and strained, but slightly triumphant) Gotcha...D-didn't want to have to resort to this, but... Barbarian. Put your sword to your neck.

(sword unsheathing)

Kirishima: (confused growl, mouth full) Katuski?!

Shinsou: (strained) Look. I'll make you a deal, Crimson. You.. **(breathless)** .. You let me go, let me *explain* and I'll lift the spell from your companion. You don't.. And I'll have him slit his own throat in front of you both.

Kirishima: (snarls angrily, Worried, mouth full) D-Don't!

(pause)

Shinsou: (tight inhale, Shaky breath) C'mon, listen to your companion, Crimson. I swear to you, on the blood we both share... to uphold my deal.

Kirishima: (Growl that melts into a whine, and he pulls off) ... Okay. Okay... **(shaky breaths, worried)** Release the spell on Katsuki.. Right now..! **(Desperate)** Please..!

Shinsou: (coughing as he sits up, spits, his voice now unmuffled) Ugh. I think you knocked out one of my fangs..**(annoyed huff)** Releasing him is easy... Just give him a pinch, Traveller. It's just like waking him up from a dream.

(Pause)

Bakugou: (Startles) OW! The hell, Traveler..? **(drops his sword, lets out a shaky huff)** What the...! Ngh... What did you do to me..?! Shit..

Kirishima: (relieved, moves over to him) Katsuki! Are you okay?!

Bakugou: Nngh- .. (huff) .. My head..

Shinsou: (pained noise as he sits up) That'll pass. It's simple mind control magic...one of my flight's specialties. Mine's rather weak though, so you don't have too much to fear. You might want to sit before you fall down though.

Bakugou: (uncomfortable dizzy noise)

Kirishima: (gentle) I gotcha Katsuki, just sit okay? **(to Shinsou, firm)** And *you*...get to talking. Or Else.

(sword draw)

Shinsou: (Startled) Easy Traveler. Didn't really take you for the violent type.. We made a deal, remember? I'll tell you what's going on. **(sighs)** I just know what my mentor told me. The Ebon King is starting to wake from his slumber...and his followers are moving through the land in search of an Azure artifact. *That* artifact..

Bakugou: (shaking off his dizziness annoyed) Oh yeah? You'll die before you get your damn hands on it again.

Kirishima: (low growl)

Shinsou: (exasperated) I don't *want* it, you thick-headed brutes. That's what I'm *trying* to tell you if you'd just LISTEN. **(sighs)** Look. The war long ago between the Ebons and the Azures led to heavy casualties on *both* sides. Militaries and Magi clashed with innocent dragons caught in the middle of the war. It splintered both our flights into smaller clans through our territories...with only the largest one and a group of cultists following The Ebon King. They joined together into a clan that calls themselves The King's Claws. They were...performing rituals of some kind to wake him up recently. No one outside of their ranks knows *why* though. They even killed our Queen.. and after she died.. others of my flight started to...**(hesitate)** Hear him. The King...

Kirishima: (aghast) They... killed his mate...?

Shinsou: (huff) No. The Ebon King's mates have long since passed...but they killed our recent Queen. Queen Alcinia (Al-sin-ee-ah). She's the descendant of the new royal line that was established when the Ebon King was locked away. At least that's what my mentor tells me.

Bakugou: So... *why* didn't your lot just kill that asshole? Not like he could fight you in his sleep. What's the use in keeping him around in that state?

Shinsou: (mirthless chuckle) Believe me, there were attempts to assassinate him. He's the first of our flight..and the strongest. Even sleeping, he is shielded by powerful barriers and trying to attack him...it..never ended well. The lucky ones just went mad.

Kirishima: (confused) There's...something I'm not understanding. That thing you said earlier... What did you mean by "Hear him"?

Shinsou: Just that. My flight specializes in magics of the mind. Of tricking the senses...and telepathy is as easy for us as breathing if you have the training. So...he's reaching out from within his slumber, trying to call others to his side for...whatever it was he was planning. I haven't heard them, but my mentor did. **(sigh)** And that's why we fled all the way here. To get away from it...

Kirishima: Oh... So... You're a rogue. You're not.. With them.

Shinsou: Correct. My mentor and I have no interest in his schemes.

Bakugou: (under his breath) Better not be lying. We're in no position to be trusting your kind.

Shinsou: (deep sigh) .. Believe what you will then, but you have my word. I want nothing to do with that cult. They're the reason why I'm with my mentor and not with my family. They're not kind to those who oppose their ideals.

Bakugou: (weary huff)Mn. **(hesitant)** Fine Traveler. If you think he's telling the truth...I'll..trust you.

(pause)

Shinsou: (soft grunt) ... *Why did they kill her?* I think it was a tactical move, Traveler...Queen Alcinia (Al-sin-ee-ah) was attempting to gather the clans back together into one unified flight. So we could rebuild and chase out the cultists and their conspirators... but killing her ruined any chance of that ever happening. It means that we're all still scattered and more susceptible to the King's influence.

Kirishima: (uneasy)..Mn. I.. Guess that makes sense. It'd be easier for him to pick off the weak and tired clans if they don't have support from others. Get them under his wing with promises and lies.

Shinsou: Mhm..and that artifact is crucial for what he's planning. That's.. All I know. I'm not sure what exactly he's up to but...I figure that it's nothing good. **(sigh as he stands, seriously)** I'm... Assuming since it's in your possession, you three know more than I do. If I can ask... What do you plan to do with it?

Bakugou: Nngh... We're gonna keep it out of that bastard King's hands. What else? We have a means to destroy the damn thing. Just gotta get there first.

Shinsou: (understanding hum) Well. You're not going to be able to do that with that gem as it is now..You three might as well have a target painted on your backs. **(sigh)** I'll perform the ritual for half the price...

Kirishima: (hopefully) R-really?!

Shinsou: Really. Keeping that artifact safe is more important than coin. **(amused)** but I'll only do it after you help me clean up, Crimson. You wrecked my mentor's shop, and I'm not going to deal with this by myself.

Kirishima: (sheepish) A-ah yeah. I can do that. Um, Sorry about that by the way. I was just-

Shinsou: You don't have to explain. I get it.

(The two start to clean)

(pause)

Bakugou: Ha? *Why do I have to help, Traveler?!* I didn't do a damn thing this time!

(pause)

Bakugou: (annoyed sigh) Fine. Sooner it's cleaned up, sooner we get this shit handled. I better see you helping too if that's the damn case...and put your shortsword away, don't really need to threaten him anymore. **(angry muttering as he starts to help)**

(Traveler sheathes their sword, audio fades out as they clean, fades back in to soft magical humming noise)

Bakugou: (annoyed huff) There! Stupid shit's picked up. You done over there or what?

Shinsou: (huffs, trying to keep his focus) Patience Barbarian...this isn't something that can be rushed. If you keep *distracting* me the spell won't take so...if you'd *be so kind*.

Bakugou: (grumbles) ...

Kirishima: (Soft) .. Sorry Traveler.. Mm... Just for uh... You know.. Having to see me like that. I- I know I don't *have* to apologize..! I just... I was worried things could get really bad when I saw he was an Ebon and I kinda....

Bakugou: (amused huff) Lost it?

Kirishima: Katsukiiii....

Bakugou: (snarky) What, you think the traveler can't handle you when you're like that?

Kirishima: It's.. it's not that! I just.. Haha.. I've been told I can be scary at times..

Bakugou: *Good.* ... I think you're forgetting the time you nearly roasted us, lizard brain. ...Heh, exactly, Traveler. It's better you can be scary... We need some of that brute force on our side.

Kirishima: .. (soft, happy whine) .. I'll always protect you guys, you know...

Bakugou: (soft) ... We know.

Shinsou: I hate to interrupt this touching moment, but I'm finished.

Bakugou: .. Ngh. Finally.

Shinsou: (sigh) .. Here. **(he hands the gem over to Bakugou)**

Bakugou: ... (huff) .. Thanks. Here's your coin.

Shinsou: (soft huff) .. Seems you gave me more than I asked.

Bakugou: Yeah, well.. Consider yourself lucky. I don't do handouts often, so.. Take the damn coin and shut up.

Shinsou: (Soft chuckle) ... Right. Thanks.

Kirishima: (eyeing the gem) Wooaah... Really seems like whatever you did worked. I can't sense any magic emanating from it anymore at all...

Bakugou: Hmph... Perfect. Here, Kirishima. Put this back in the satchel.

Kirishima: Got it!

Shinsou: I can't tell you exactly how long the spell will last, but it won't wear out for a good while. Your crimson is magically adept, so he'll be the first one to feel the magic when it starts to fade back in. When that happens... I hope you're near another sorcerer or you're close to your destination.

(pause)

Shinsou: You're welcome Traveler.

(cat meow)

Shinsou: Hm. Seems you three got the guards all worked up according to Rila (Ree-lah)..so I'll do this favor for you. For her sake.

(magical noise)

Bakugou: Hah? .. Ngh-

Kirishima: (shudder) Ah that feels kinda tickly!

Shinsou: There. I don't have much mana left, but that spell should be enough to help you get out of here unnoticed. It won't make you fully invisible, but it's an illusion to keep you far less noticeable.. So don't get too cocky. I'm looking at you, Barbarian.

Bakugou: ..Ah?! Tch...

Shinsou: Follow Rila, she knows a secret way out of the city. Trying to get out via the noble's gate would be akin to suicide if those guards are after you.

Kirishima: Right! Ah... **(Sheepish)** Thanks...we appreciate your help..even after uh...that misunderstanding.

Bakugou: Yeah just keep our visit to yourself alright? Last thing we need is more bastards sniffing after our trail. **(huff)** C'mon, let's get the hell out of this god forsaken city.

(footsteps, cat meow, jingle as the cat runs past, door opens)

Kirishima: (happily) After you, Miss Rilancia (Ree-lahn-ee-ah), lead the way!

Shinsou: Hey... By the way, do you want me to null that other magical item for you before you go?

Bakugou: Haa?

Shinsou: The other magical item you carry, in your bag. I sensed it after nulling the magic on the gem.

Kirishima: Uh... What other magical item. I don't think we... Have one? ..hmm.

Bakugou: (huff) Look, we don't have time for this. The damn cat's already walking off without us- It's probably just my damn earrings. **(walking off after the cat, calls back)** Don't worry about it, just come on!

Kirishima: Uh..! Katsuki wait up..! **(turning back to Shinsou sheepishly)** Sorry..! I think we're good for now! Thanks again! Come on, traveler!

Shinsou: Mmm.... Suit yourself.

(They run off after the cat)

The furball led us through the city, through tiny cramped alleyways and holes in fences. We even snuck our way through some random inn's cellar as we worked our way out of the city, avoiding the guards who seemed now to be frustrated by their fruitless search for us.

*By the time we squeezed our way out of the city through a dry water pipe, the sun was dipping low in the sky, the glow of twilight settling onto the land and its surrounding forests. After you and Kirishima spent forever thanking.. **(deep sigh)** .. and petting the damn cat, she returned to the city. We hurried along our way, following the road to the north west to find a safe place to camp and settle in for the night.*

The whole day had been nerve wracking: coming face to face with what we assumed to be an enemy, and being hunted within the walls of the city like common criminals. It was worth it though, knowing now that we had time. We had... breathing room. A chance to push onwards without magic hungry fiends breathing down our necks..and hopefully, we'd get a large enough headstart before the spell wore off.