The staff room was steeped in an unusual stillness, the kind that settled only after something dangerous had brushed too close to the mundane. The afternoon sun, now fading, painted long, sharp stripes across the polished table where the core faculty sat in grim silence.

Toshinori Yagi, a muscular monolith at the head of the table, sat stiffly, arms folded tight against his chest. Though Kagutsuchi had restored his body months ago, today held no trace of his usual warmth or heroic cheer. His bright blue eyes were clouded, fixed on the scattered papers before him—reports detailing yesterday's unsettling encounter with Tristis.

Across from him, Aizawa Shota leaned back, arms crossed, eyes half-lidded in his perpetually exhausted way. Yet, there was an edge to his tone that cut through the quiet. "Let me get this straight," Aizawa said flatly, his voice laced with irritation. "One of these… Lords just walks into the city, tests Midoriya in the middle of an open street, and leaves because—" His brow twitched slightly. "—because he had dinner plans?"

"Sukiyaki," Kagutsuchi corrected, completely unfazed. He lounged in his seat, a lazy, trademark smirk playing on his lips, his dark coat draped carelessly over the back of his chair. He sipped his tea as if this were just another boring meeting. "And yes. He promised his family sukiyaki. You think he'd risk being late? The guy's a stickler for promises."

A long pause hung in the air. Present Mic, slouched near the window, slowly turned his head toward the golden-eyed man. "You're kidding me."

"Not at all," Kagutsuchi said with a shrug. "Tristis has two kids. Loves them to death. The guy wouldn't even jaywalk if it meant upsetting them."

Aizawa's eyes narrowed, unimpressed. "You realize how insane this sounds, right? You're telling me a being who could level half this city decided to take a rain check because he's a family man."

"Most Lords are family men, or women," Kagutsuchi replied with an almost bored tone. "They have jobs. Homes. Some are accountants. Teachers. Hell, one of them works as a secretary at the Kantei. They're not villains, Eraserhead. They live among you because they want to. The only time they fight is when they're ordered to… or when they're curious."

Toshinori finally looked up from the reports, his brows knitted in concern. "Curious or not, this was reckless. Tristis engaged Midoriya in the middle of the city. If Izuku hadn't been quick to lead him away, civilians could have been caught in the crossfire."

Kagutsuchi's smirk faltered slightly, replaced with a rare moment of seriousness. "You're not wrong. But Tristis isn't like Luteus. He wasn't testing Izuku out of malice. He just wanted to know if the boy who beat his fellow Lord was worth the reputation."

Aizawa's voice grew colder, his gaze unflinching. "And if one of them decides it's not just a test? If one of these things decides Midoriya isn't just an opponent, but a threat?"

Kagutsuchi's golden eyes flashed with a quiet, unsettling amusement. "Then you'd better hope Midoriya's been training." He sipped his tea, the words hanging in the air like a casual death sentence.

The silence that followed was heavy. Toshinori's jaw tightened as he looked down again at the reports, his hands unconsciously curling into fists. For all of Kagutsuchi's nonchalance, the danger was clear, and it made his stomach churn.

The sun had dipped lower, casting the training grounds in a soft amber glow. Izuku sat alone on a bench near the edge of campus, his school bag at his feet, the faint hum of students training echoing in the distance. He sat with his elbows resting on his knees, a bottle of water in his hands, staring quietly at the ground.

His mind replayed yesterday's fight. Tristis' calm, precise strikes. His voice when he asked if Izuku had killed Luteus. And then, just as suddenly, his casual retreat for dinner.

They're not villains, Izuku thought, his brows knitting together. They're not heroes, either. They're just… people. People who happen to be stronger than almost anyone else alive.

"Midoriya!"

Izuku looked up, startled slightly, as Mirio Togata jogged over, his usual sunny smile present but tinged with something softer, more thoughtful. He plopped down beside Izuku without waiting for an invitation, resting his arms on his knees.

"Hope I'm not interrupting," Mirio said, his cheerful tone easing the weight of Izuku's thoughts. "You looked like you were thinking pretty hard."

Izuku shook his head. "You're not interrupting, Togata-senpai."

Mirio smiled, but his voice softened. "You alright? You seemed… I dunno. Off. Even for someone who fought a Lord yesterday."

Izuku hesitated before answering, his eyes lowering to his hands. "…It's strange. Tristis wasn't like a villain. He didn't feel evil. He just—" His voice caught for a second as he tried to explain. "—he had a family to get back to. He left because he promised them dinner. Not because I scared him off."

Mirio blinked, then chuckled quietly, shaking his head. "That's… that's wild. Dangerous, sure, but not evil." He gave Izuku's shoulder a reassuring pat. "That's a good thing, though. It means they're not all bad. Maybe some of them aren't enemies at all."

Izuku's lips tugged into a faint smile, though there was still a trace of unease in his eyes. "I hope so."

Mirio grinned, his bright energy returning. "Hey, you just keep being you. All Might clearly sees something in you. And if he believes in you, then I believe in you, too."

Izuku flushed slightly, his voice softer. "…Thank you, Togata-senpai."

Mirio gave him a playful grin, leaning back on the bench. "That's what friends are for."

For the first time since the fight, Izuku's shoulders relaxed, a genuine smile breaking through his quiet worry.

That night, Kagutsuchi stood alone on a balcony overlooking the glowing cityscape, his ever-present smirk gone. A cigarette smoldered between his fingers, the ember glowing faintly in the dark.

"You felt that, didn't you, Graviel?" he murmured to the night sky, his golden eyes narrowing.

There was no answer, only the soft rush of the wind.

Kagutsuchi exhaled a thin stream of smoke, his expression darkening. "Don't wait too long, old friend. The kid's growing faster than either of us expected."

The early morning sunlight filtered gently through the kitchen window of the Midoriya household, painting the cozy room in warm, domestic hues. The scent of miso soup and freshly cooked rice wafted through the air, promising a comforting start to the day.

Izuku Midoriya, still half-asleep and feeling the lingering soreness from yesterday's brutal sparring session with Tristis, shuffled into the kitchen. His green hair was even more unruly than usual, sticking up at odd angles, and his eyes were barely slits. He mumbled a sleepy, "Morning..." as he instinctively reached for a ceramic mug from the cupboard.

"Morning, kid," a calm, measured voice replied.

Izuku froze, his hand hovering over the mug. That voice. It wasn't his mom's. Slowly, his groggy brain began to process the presence in the room that wasn't Inko. He turned his head, his eyes widening in disbelief.

Sitting casually at the kitchen table, sipping a cup of tea as if he lived there, was Kagutsuchi. He was dressed in a simple, dark shirt, his golden eyes observing Izuku with a faint, amused smirk.

"Oh, Izuku, you're finally up!" Inko Midoriya chirped from the stove, her back to them as she hummed happily, stirring a pot. She turned, a bright, welcoming smile on her face. "Your friend is very polite, Izuku! He's been telling me all about your training. You should listen to him more!"

Izuku's face flushed a furious red. "F-friend?! Mom, what—"

Kagutsuchi merely took another sip of his tea, his smirk widening. "He hesitated again yesterday, Inko-san. Almost tripped over his own feet. Still relying too much on brute force."

Inko gasped dramatically, her hands flying to her mouth. "Oh, Izuku! Is that true? You must be more careful! You work so hard, but you need to be safe!" She bustled over, fussing over her son, gently patting his arm and checking his forehead as if he had a fever.

Izuku wanted the floor to swallow him whole. "M-Mom, it's fine! Kagutsuchi-san is exaggerating!" He shot a mortified glare at the man, who simply chuckled softly into his tea.

Breakfast was a surreal affair. Inko, completely oblivious to the cosmic implications of their guest, continued to chat cheerfully with Kagutsuchi about Izuku's "hero training," offering him second helpings of rice and tea. Izuku, meanwhile, tried to eat as quickly as possible, desperate for the ordeal to end.

Between bites of his tamagoyaki, Kagutsuchi's tone dropped slightly, losing its casual amusement. His golden eyes met Izuku's, a quiet intensity in their depths. "Eat up, kid," he said, his voice low but clear. "Today's going to be harder."

Izuku froze, his chopsticks halfway to his mouth. The casual words carried a sudden, undeniable weight. He swallowed, the food feeling like ash in his mouth, and nodded quietly. The comfortable warmth of the kitchen suddenly felt charged, the domestic scene a thin veil over the dangerous reality that Kagutsuchi represented.

The late afternoon sun cast long shadows across U.A.'s training field, the golden light catching motes of dust that drifted lazily through the air. The once-quiet space was alive with sharp impacts and strained breathing.

"Again!" Kagutsuchi barked, his voice cutting through the air like a whip.

Izuku gritted his teeth, panting as sweat dripped from his chin. His shirt clung to him, soaked through, but he launched forward again, driving his fist through the air at Kagutsuchi.

The man barely moved, just tilting his head slightly as Izuku's punch passed harmlessly by. With almost casual grace, Kagutsuchi shifted, hooking Izuku's wrist and throwing him over his shoulder. Izuku hit the mat with a dull thud, coughing as the air rushed out of his lungs.

"Too much hesitation," Kagutsuchi said flatly, crossing his arms as Izuku rolled to his side. "You're still thinking. Agito instinct isn't something you command like a Quirk. You let it move you."

Izuku pushed himself to his feet, wincing. "I know… I'm trying—"

"Don't try. Move." Kagutsuchi's sharp gaze bore into him. "You'll never survive against the ones coming if you hesitate."

Izuku's breath hitched, but he nodded firmly, forcing his tired legs to settle into a fighting stance again.

The two moved in bursts after that—Izuku lunging, Kagutsuchi weaving and parrying with effortless precision. Each time, Izuku's movements grew sharper, a little more fluid, his mind beginning to quiet as he gave in to that strange, instinctual rhythm.

Then, Kagutsuchi froze mid-motion, his golden eyes flicking toward the far edge of the field. Izuku noticed it too late—he nearly stumbled into Kagutsuchi before catching himself.

Two figures stood there, just beyond the perimeter. They weren't trying to hide; if anything, they looked comfortable watching.

One was tall and lean, his appearance almost human save for the faint shimmer of chitin beneath his skin. The other was shorter, with heteromorphic features—mandibles flexing slightly as he tilted his head curiously.

The taller one gave a low whistle. "So that's the boy Kagutsuchi's been training. Doesn't look like much… yet."

The shorter one folded his arms. "You can feel it, though, can't you? He's not like the others."

Kagutsuchi didn't move, didn't call them out. He just stared. Eventually, the taller Lord gave a casual wave. "Relax. We're just watching. Not every Lord's here to tear him apart, you know."

The two turned and walked away without another word, vanishing into the tree line as silently as they had appeared.

Izuku exhaled shakily, tension finally slipping from his shoulders. "Who… who were they?"

"Minor Lords," Kagutsuchi replied, his tone unreadable. "Curious ones. Word's spreading faster than I'd like. You're becoming… interesting."

Izuku swallowed, wiping the sweat from his brow. "Will they come back?"

Kagutsuchi finally looked back at him, his usual lazy smirk absent. "Them? Maybe. Others? Definitely. And next time, it won't just be curious ones watching."

Izuku clenched his fists, his expression tightening, but he gave a determined nod. "Then… I'll be ready."

Kagutsuchi studied him for a moment longer, then gave a faint, approving grunt.

A soft breeze drifted through the open shoji doors of a quiet, immaculate room. The faint aroma of green tea mingled with the warm scent of tatami. Sunlight filtered through sheer curtains, painting long stripes across the floor.

A lone figure sat cross-legged at a low table, his delicate, almost boyish features framed by loose strands of hair that had slipped from his tied ponytail. Barefoot, dressed in a crisp white shirt and dark trousers, he lifted a porcelain teacup with elegant precision.

The room was still—too still. Even the kneeling Lord before him, head bowed low, seemed afraid to breathe too loudly.

"…It has begun," the kneeling Lord said finally, his voice hushed as if fearing to disturb the air itself. "Kagutsuchi's chosen boy—his power grows with every day."

The figure didn't immediately respond. He simply took a slow sip of his tea, his expression unreadable, his gaze unfocused as if listening to something distant, something no one else could hear.

The silence stretched, heavy and oppressive, until he finally set the cup down with the faintest clink.

"…So, Kagutsuchi has found himself another candidate," he said softly, his tone calm, almost gentle—yet there was something in his voice that sent a chill through the kneeling Lord, something that hinted at quiet disapproval… and curiosity.

He turned slightly, letting his bangs fall across his glasses as he gazed out the open shoji door at the sunlit garden beyond.

"…Interesting."

The kneeling Lord risked glancing up. "Shall we… do something about him?"

A faint smile tugged at the corner of the man's lips, serene yet carrying a strange weight.

"…No," he said at last, his voice smooth as silk. "Not yet. But I will… take a look. In time."

The Lord swallowed hard and bowed again, lowering his forehead to the tatami. "As you wish, my Lord."

The boyish man picked up his tea again, his reflection glinting in the surface of the pale liquid. His words were quiet, almost an afterthought, but they carried the weight of a coming storm:

"Inform the others if you must. Tell them…"

He took another slow sip before finishing, his gaze sharp behind the lenses of his glasses.

"…Graviel is watching."

The final bell had rung, and the last clusters of students were streaming out of the U.A. halls. The faculty room was unusually quiet for this time of day—Aizawa was already lounging in his usual seat, eyes half-closed, while Midnight casually flipped through a fashion magazine. Vlad King and Present Mic were exchanging notes for upcoming classes, and Toshinori, in his civilian form, sat near the window reviewing some incident reports.

The door slid open, and before anyone could react, Kagutsuchi strode in as if he owned the place. His dark coat swayed with each casual step, and that ever-present, infuriatingly confident smirk was plastered on his face.

"Good afternoon, esteemed educators," he announced with a mock bow, his tone just on the edge of playful mockery.

Aizawa didn't even bother to open both eyes. "What do you want, Kagutsuchi?"

"Now, now, don't sound so dour," Kagutsuchi said, waving a hand as if to brush off the irritation. "I come bearing good news! I'm inviting all of you to dinner. My treat."

The faculty exchanged glances.

Midnight raised an eyebrow. "Dinner? What's the occasion?"

Kagutsuchi gave her a sly grin. "Oh, let's just call it… a little get-together before things get interesting. Naomasa's been filling you in on some of the basics, hasn't he? About the other Lords?"

At that, the room stirred.

"Yes," Nezu answered, placing his paws together atop the table, his sharp eyes fixed on Kagutsuchi. "Naomasa has informed us of… certain details. Enough to know that you're not the only one of your kind. But he was vague on purpose, wasn't he?"

"Of course he was," Kagutsuchi replied smoothly. "Naomasa doesn't know even a fraction of it. And I figured, before things spiral, you should at least hear some of it from me. Over food. You'll like the place—it's one of my subordinate's restaurants."

"A subordinate?" Vlad King frowned. "You mean—"

"Yes," Kagutsuchi cut in, not missing a beat. "A Lord. Minor, but talented. Five hundred years old, wonderful cook. You'll love him."

There was a collective pause as that sunk in.

Midnight leaned back, arms crossed, smirking skeptically. "So we'll be eating dinner cooked by a Lord? How… exotic."

"I'm not sure if that's the right word," Cementoss muttered under his breath.

Nezu tilted his head, voice calm but edged with curiosity. "And during this dinner, you intend to… elaborate?"

Kagutsuchi smiled, his golden eyes glinting. "Exactly. You deserve to know what's walking around your country… and under my command. You've heard the rumors, but I prefer facts to speculation."

Aizawa gave him a flat look. "Why now?"

Kagutsuchi's grin widened slightly, just enough to show teeth. "Because things are about to get crazy, Aizawa. And it's better if you understand who's actually running things before you panic."

Toshinori, silent until now, finally spoke, his voice low. "This isn't just a social call, is it?"

"Nothing ever is, Yagi-san," Kagutsuchi said lightly, turning toward the door. "I'll expect you all at seven. Don't worry about the bill—when you live as long as I do, money's just a number."

And with that, he left as abruptly as he'd entered, the door sliding shut behind him.

The faculty sat in silence for a long moment.

Finally, Present Mic exhaled. "Well… that's not ominous at all."

Nezu, meanwhile, sat back in his chair, eyes gleaming with curiosity. "Fascinating… absolutely fascinating…"

The city streets were awash in warm evening light, the orange glow of streetlamps mingling with the last fading streaks of sunset. U.A.'s faculty walked together, a procession of varied temperaments and formal attire.

Toshinori Yagi, in his relaxed form, wore an impeccably tailored dark suit, the crisp white shirt and subtle tie a stark contrast to his usual casual wear, though his eyes still darted with a hero's vigilance. Aizawa Shota, ever the pragmatist, had opted for a dark, well-fitted blazer over a charcoal turtleneck, his perpetually tired eyes still sharp beneath his bangs. Nemuri Kayama, Midnight, was striking in a sleek, deep purple cocktail dress that shimmered subtly with her movements, her hair elegantly swept up. Vlad King, a man of imposing presence, was in a classic, dark three-piece suit, his broad shoulders filling it out perfectly. Cementoss, too, wore a dark suit, its stoic lines reflecting his calm demeanor. Present Mic, predictably, was the most flamboyant, his suit a vibrant, almost electric blue, though still formal, with a patterned tie that caught the light. Nezu, perched comfortably on Present Mic's shoulder, wore a miniature, perfectly tailored waistcoat, looking utterly delighted.

The restaurant itself came into view soon enough—a two-story, traditional-looking building tucked neatly between modern establishments. Warm paper lanterns swayed gently in the evening breeze, casting a soft glow over the entrance. The sign above the door bore simple calligraphy: "Shinka"—Evolution.

"Subtle name," Present Mic muttered, adjusting his tinted glasses.

"Very," Vlad King replied flatly.

The sliding doors opened before they could knock, and a tall man in a crisp chef's uniform greeted them with a bow. His features were sharp, his smile calm, but there was something about him—an almost too-perfect grace, the way his golden eyes glinted under the lantern light—that betrayed exactly what he was.

"Welcome," the man said smoothly. "I am Takumi, your host for the evening. Please, come inside. Kagutsuchi-sama has already prepared a private room for you."

Midnight raised a brow. "Takumi, huh? You're a Lord, aren't you?"

The chef chuckled lightly. "I am. A Minor Lord under Kagutsuchi-sama's command. But tonight, I am simply your chef. Please, allow me to show you the best of what this world's cuisine has to offer."

The group exchanged wary glances as they followed him inside.

The interior was warm, almost deceptively mundane—polished wooden floors, low tables, tatami mats, and the inviting scent of perfectly grilled fish and simmering miso broth wafting through the air. A few other patrons sat scattered throughout the main hall, laughing and chatting like any normal diners, utterly unaware that their meals were being prepared by an immortal being who could probably flatten a Nomu with a flick of his wrist.

Takumi led them through to a private room at the back, sliding the paper door open to reveal Kagutsuchi already seated cross-legged at a low table. He was nursing a sake cup, looking as though he had been waiting for hours despite having only arrived moments ago. He had shed his usual casual attire for a dark, flowing kimono of fine silk, its subtle embroidery catching the light, his golden eyes gleaming with a quiet anticipation.

"Ah, finally!" Kagutsuchi greeted them with his trademark grin. "Come in, everyone! Sit, sit! Don't be shy—Takumi is an excellent cook, and he takes immense pride in this place. Treat yourselves; it's on me, after all."

Aizawa gave a long, weary sigh and sat nearest to the door, clearly wanting to leave as soon as possible. Midnight sat across from him with an amused grin, while Vlad and Cementoss took seats with visible reluctance. Nezu hopped into a place of honor at the head of the table, his eyes twinkling with curiosity, and Toshinori settled next to him, still wearing that same worried, conflicted look.

As the faculty arranged themselves, Kagutsuchi leaned back casually, swirling his sake cup with an easy smile.

"Well," he said, golden eyes glinting in the soft light. "Shall we talk about the Lords?"

The aroma of freshly grilled fish, sweet soy glaze, and delicate steamed vegetables filled the private room, drifting in as Takumi and a pair of servers—also Lords, judging by their almost too-perfect movements—brought in tray after tray of dishes.

Platters of sashimi so fresh they practically glistened in the soft lantern light were placed at the center, alongside steaming bowls of miso soup, rice topped with tender grilled eel, and small plates of seasonal pickles.

"Enjoy, enjoy!" Kagutsuchi said, gesturing with his sake cup like a gracious host. "Takumi's been running this place for seventy years. Trust me, you won't find better eel anywhere in Japan."

Present Mic immediately dove in, already halfway through his first bite. "Yo, he wasn't kidding! This is killer! Are you sure we're not getting the VIP treatment?"

Takumi, kneeling politely nearby, gave a modest smile. "Everyone receives the same quality of food here, Mic-san."

"Takumi-san, huh," Midnight said, taking a slow sip of sake with a teasing grin. "I can't believe the world's full of these supposed ancient, powerful beings… running restaurants."

"Ah, don't be so surprised," Kagutsuchi said with a laugh. "Even immortals need hobbies. Takumi loves cooking. If I tried to stop him, he'd probably kill me. Isn't that right, Takumi?"

Takumi inclined his head with an elegant smile. "If Kagutsuchi-sama ever interfered with my restaurant, I would be forced to… protest."

Cementoss, who had been quietly nibbling his food, froze slightly at the tone. "He's joking, right?"

"Don't bet on it," Vlad King muttered.

Meanwhile, Nezu was happily savoring the food, looking every bit like an inquisitive child in a candy store. "Exquisite! Tell me, Takumi-san, have you been cooking long before… well, the Quirk Era?"

"Since the late Edo period," Takumi replied without hesitation.

Present Mic coughed, nearly choking on his rice. "Late Edo—?! You've been cooking for that long?!"

"Practice makes perfect," Takumi said simply.

The room fell into a stunned silence for a moment before Midnight broke it with a wry smile. "Well, at least immortality comes with perks. I'd kill to look that good after a hundred years."

Takumi's polite smile didn't change. "We are forbidden from dying of age-related causes. It's not so much a perk as… a rule."

That made the air shift slightly, the weight of that statement lingering as Takumi excused himself to bring more food.

Kagutsuchi, still relaxed, sipped his sake and leaned back. "So. Now that you've had a taste of Takumi's hard work… shall we get to the real reason I invited you here?"

The room quieted almost instantly. Toshinori, who had barely touched his food, set his chopsticks down and looked at Kagutsuchi warily.

"You all already know what I am," Kagutsuchi began, his tone still casual but his golden eyes sharper now. "Naomasa's been kind enough to share the basics, hasn't he? That there are Lords—many of us—scattered across Japan, across the world, blending in with humans."

Nezu nodded slightly, his sharp mind already working. "Yes. But we've only heard rumors. This… confirmation is enlightening."

"Well, then let me make it crystal clear." Kagutsuchi placed his sake cup down, his smile never wavering. "Every single Lord in Japan works under me. Every Minor Lord, every Subordinate Lord—they all follow my orders."

There was a ripple of disbelief at the table. Midnight arched a brow, Vlad frowned, and even Toshinori's expression tightened.

"And you allow them to just… live among us?" Cementoss asked cautiously.

"Of course," Kagutsuchi said smoothly. "Why shouldn't they? My Lords have more leeway than others of our kind. They can live in this world freely, mingle with mortals, make friends, open restaurants…" He gestured vaguely toward the door. "The Quirk Era changed everything. When Heteromorphs started appearing, it became much easier for my people to live openly, without disguises. Before that, we had to blend in perfectly, which… honestly, was exhausting for most of them."

Toshinori finally spoke, his voice serious. "And what about the ones not under you? What about the other High Lords?"

At that, Kagutsuchi's smile dimmed just slightly. "Not all share my views. Some… are stricter. Graviel, for example, doesn't allow his subordinates to mingle at all."

The name hung in the air for a moment, unfamiliar yet carrying weight.

Nezu, ever the curious one, tilted his head. "And what of you, Kagutsuchi? Surely this isn't your true form, is it?"

Kagutsuchi chuckled softly, leaning his chin on one hand. "You're right, Nezu. None of us—High Lord or Minor—are allowed to show our true forms. Mortals wouldn't be able to comprehend them properly. What you see now? It's just… a convenient face for you all to interact with."

Midnight smirked, raising a brow. "So when will we get to see your true forms?"

Kagutsuchi's smile widened into something almost mischievous. He tilted his head, golden eyes glinting in the lantern light.

"Oh, eventually," he said, voice low and almost playful. "When the end of the world comes."

The room went completely silent.

For a long, tense moment, no one spoke. The warm glow of the lanterns suddenly felt dimmer, the inviting aroma of food now drowned out by the weight of Kagutsuchi's words.

"The end… of the world?" Vlad King repeated slowly, his voice almost incredulous.

Kagutsuchi smirked faintly, swirling the sake in his cup before taking a leisurely sip. "Relax, Vlad. I didn't say it's coming tomorrow. It's just… when the time eventually comes for all of us to drop the masks, that'll be the day. Until then, you'll just have to put up with this boring human face."

"Boring, he says," Midnight muttered, leaning back with her arms crossed. "You're talking about this like you're discussing the weather."

"That's because for us, it's just that—a forecast," Kagutsuchi said with a shrug, still casual despite the tension creeping into the room. Then his golden eyes sharpened, the laid-back amusement dimming slightly. "And speaking of forecasts… I should probably tell you about Graviel."

Nezu perked up immediately, his bright, intelligent eyes narrowing with interest. "The name you mentioned earlier. Graviel… another High Lord?"

Kagutsuchi nodded, setting his sake cup down. "My peer, yes. He oversees the Lords in the western territories and much of central Asia. Unlike me, Graviel doesn't believe in giving his subordinates… freedom."

"Meaning?" Cementoss asked, his deep voice cautious.

"Meaning his Lords live under strict command," Kagutsuchi replied plainly. "No human interaction outside of what's absolutely necessary. No businesses, no mingling, no families."

The idea made even Midnight frown, her usual playful smirk softening into something grim. "Sounds like a prison."

Kagutsuchi gave a small, humorless chuckle. "It is, in a way. But Graviel's reasoning is simple: he believes contact with humanity weakens us. Corrupts us. He's a firm believer that we were created for one purpose and one purpose only—the hunt."

Toshinori's jaw tightened slightly at that. "And I take it he doesn't approve of you allowing your Lords to live freely."

"Not in the slightest," Kagutsuchi admitted, leaning back lazily in his seat, though his golden eyes glinted with a sharp edge. "We've disagreed for centuries. And he's probably already aware of me shielding an Agito like Midoriya."

That made the entire table shift uneasily.

"Wait," Mic said, his voice louder than he intended. "Are you saying this Graviel guy's been… watching the kid?"

"Likely," Kagutsuchi said without hesitation. "Graviel isn't the type to sit idle, and he has no shortage of obedient Lords to do his scouting for him. Some of the odd reports Naomasa's been getting lately? People standing in crowds too still, lingering too long near training sites? That's probably them."

Toshinori's hands clenched tightly in his lap, his face hardening. "So he's planning something."

"Maybe," Kagutsuchi said, his tone maddeningly calm. "Or maybe he's just observing for now. Graviel is patient, far more so than me. But don't be surprised if he decides to test Izuku eventually. Graviel doesn't care about sentiment, or potential. If he thinks Midoriya's existence threatens the balance, he'll act."

There was a heavy silence as that sank in.

"Great," Midnight muttered under her breath. "So we've got a god-level creep watching our students now. Just great."

Kagutsuchi only gave a small, almost reassuring smile, raising his cup once more. "Don't worry too much. If Graviel comes, I'll deal with him. But…" He tilted his head, his tone softening just slightly, almost as if speaking to himself. "Even Graviel will have to acknowledge it when the boy truly awakens. That's the kind of future we're heading toward."

Nezu, always watching, tilted his head curiously. "And what future is that, Kagutsuchi-san?"

Kagutsuchi's smile widened, but this time there was something unreadable, almost wistful in his golden eyes as he answered:

"One where even High Lords like us will have no choice but to bow to the light."

The faculty exchanged uneasy looks, the quiet clink of Kagutsuchi setting his cup down the only sound in the room.

The weight of Kagutsuchi's words hung over the table like a storm cloud. For a long moment, no one spoke; even Nezu was unusually quiet, lost in his own calculations. The only sound was the soft hum of the restaurant's background music and the faint clinking of plates being carried by the staff.

Then Kagutsuchi leaned back with a sigh, stretching his arms over his head like nothing serious had just been discussed.

"Anyway," he said, his golden eyes gleaming with mischief as a grin spread across his face, "enough doom and gloom. Eat your food before it gets cold. You can't save the world on an empty stomach, trust me—I've tried."

Present Mic blinked at him, startled by the sudden shift, while Midnight frowned. "That's your big solution to all of this? Eat?"

Kagutsuchi nodded solemnly, though the faint smirk tugging at his lips betrayed his sincerity. "Of course. Everything in this world—love, war, peace, even the end of the world—goes better on a full stomach. And besides…" He lifted his sake cup again, swirling the liquid lazily. "If Graviel shows up tomorrow, at least you'll all have had one last good meal. Priorities, people."

There was a long pause… then Vlad King let out an incredulous snort, and even Cementoss cracked a reluctant smile.

"Can't argue with that logic," Mic muttered, picking his chopsticks back up with a resigned shrug.

Toshinori, however, remained quiet, his gaze still distant, clearly not amused—but even he couldn't help the faint twitch of his lips.

Kagutsuchi raised his cup in a mock toast, his grin widening. "That's the spirit. Now eat, laugh, drink. Tomorrow can wait until it gets here."

The tension, while not gone, eased just enough for conversation to tentatively return to the table. But beneath it all, the weight of what Kagutsuchi had revealed still lingered like a quiet shadow, leaving every hero at the table with the same uneasy thought:

If Graviel was already watching… how much time did they really have?

The clatter of chopsticks and soft murmur of conversation filled the air again, but every now and then, curious eyes darted toward Kagutsuchi. The golden-eyed "janitor" seemed completely at ease, calmly chewing his food as if he hadn't just dropped divine revelations on them.

Finally, Midnight leaned forward, resting her chin on her palm, eyes gleaming with curiosity. "You're in a good mood tonight, Kagutsuchi-san… so, mind if I throw a few questions at you?"

Kagutsuchi, without looking up, waved his chopsticks lazily in her direction. "Go on. But make it good, Nemuri-san—I only answer for people who ask nicely."

Aizawa groaned under his breath, but even he was listening now.

Midnight's eyes narrowed playfully. "Alright then… you being an angel—and yes, I'm still wrapping my head around that—does that mean the Bible is real? All those stories we've been told, are they true?"

The table went quiet again. Even Nezu, who had been poking at his food thoughtfully, stopped. Every pair of eyes turned toward Kagutsuchi, waiting.

Kagutsuchi finally looked up, grinning that infuriatingly cryptic grin of his. "Yes… and no."

That earned him a collective groan.

"Care to elaborate?" Vlad King asked dryly.

Kagutsuchi set his chopsticks down, leaning back comfortably in his seat. "Some of it happened exactly as written. Key events, divine interventions, those were very real. But…" He twirled a hand in the air. "Mortals like to embellish. To make stories grander, shinier, to fit their narrative of good and evil. What you read in holy texts is… about fifty percent truth, forty percent dramatization, and ten percent outright nonsense."

"Wait, wait, wait," Present Mic cut in, wide-eyed. "So you're saying—what, Moses parting the sea? The flood? Those actually happened?"

Kagutsuchi tilted his head thoughtfully, his grin softening just a little. "I wasn't there for all of it, but… yes. Some things that sound impossible to you now were real. But they weren't always exactly as you think. The seas didn't exactly 'split cleanly in half,' more like… tides were manipulated. And the flood? It wasn't the entire world, just the world as those people knew it."

Nezu's whiskers twitched, fascinated. "So the embellishments shaped history while burying the real events…"

"Exactly." Kagutsuchi pointed his chopsticks at him approvingly. "Humans always crave stories bigger than themselves, so they fill in the blanks with myth. We just learned to let you."

Midnight leaned back, blinking in disbelief. "So basically, the Bible is… what, a half-accurate fanfiction?"

Kagutsuchi barked out a laugh, almost choking on his sake. "That's… actually a good way to put it. Though don't quote me on that if you ever meet Graviel—he'd tan your hide for saying it out loud."

That name made the table tense again. Toshinori shifted slightly, his expression tight. "And you're sure… he knows about Izuku already?"

Kagutsuchi's grin faded just slightly, replaced with something calmer, more serious. "Oh, Toshinori, he's known for a while. He's been sending his own to keep an eye on your boy for months now. He's patient, but don't mistake that for indifference."

A chill passed over the table.

"Then… when do we meet him?" Aizawa asked quietly.

Kagutsuchi smiled faintly, picking up his cup again. "When Graviel decides you're worth his time." He took a slow drink, setting the cup down with a soft click. "And trust me, you'll know the moment he arrives."

The table went silent after Kagutsuchi's words, every faculty member watching him intently. His casual grin didn't waver as he took another bite of grilled fish, chewing as if he hadn't just admitted to having firsthand knowledge of divine history.

The night air outside the restaurant was cool and crisp, the glow of street lamps casting soft halos over the quiet sidewalk. The faculty exited in small groups, chatting quietly among themselves. The earlier tension of Kagutsuchi's revelations had been dulled somewhat by food and drink, but it still lingered, like the aftertaste of something they couldn't quite shake.

Kagutsuchi walked at the back of the group, hands in his coat pockets, humming cheerfully to himself. His relaxed stride and easy grin were a stark contrast to the wary glances exchanged by the others. Even after the lighthearted banter at dinner, his casual mention of "the end of the world" refused to leave their minds.

Midnight let out a soft sigh, her heels clicking against the pavement as she slowed her steps to walk beside him. "You know, for someone who's supposed to be an angel, you really enjoy keeping us on edge."

Kagutsuchi smirked, eyes forward. "Keeps your senses sharp. You never know when you'll need them."

Before Midnight could retort, Aizawa, walking just ahead, stiffened slightly. His sharp eyes darted to the far end of the street.

"...Do you feel that?" he murmured, his voice low but carrying enough weight to halt the group's casual chatter.

Nezu, perched calmly on Present Mic's shoulder, tilted his head, his beady eyes narrowing. "Interesting. There's a shift in the air pressure. Subtle, but noticeable."

One by one, the teachers began to feel it too. A strange stillness had settled over the street, like the quiet before a storm. The air seemed heavier, the faint rustle of leaves and the distant hum of the city muffled under an almost tangible pressure.

Present Mic's usual exuberance faded, his voice uncharacteristically hushed. "Yo… anyone else feel like we're being watched right now?"

Kagutsuchi didn't stop walking. His golden eyes glanced toward the darkened rooftops, his grin softening into something more subdued—something knowing.

"Ah… so he is here," he said quietly, almost to himself.

The faculty turned to him sharply, Midnight taking a step closer. "He? You mean—"

Before she could finish, a cold breeze swept through the street, brushing past them like an unseen presence moving deliberately around them. A faint shadow flickered across a rooftop in the distance, gone as quickly as it appeared, but the sensation of being observed didn't fade. If anything, it grew heavier, more focused, as if a gaze far sharper than any human's was measuring them, one by one.

Aizawa's eyes narrowed, scanning every dark corner. "Who is it, Kagutsuchi?"

Kagutsuchi finally stopped, turning his head slightly toward the rooftop where the shadow had vanished. His grin returned, softer this time, but his voice carried a weight that silenced any further questions.

"Graviel."

The moment the name left his lips, the pressure in the air seemed to ease, just slightly, as if in acknowledgment. No figure revealed itself, no words were spoken, but the faculty felt it—whoever was watching had chosen to leave.

Midnight exhaled slowly, visibly shivering. "So… he's been watching us the whole time."

Kagutsuchi shoved his hands back into his pockets, his tone light again, as if they hadn't just been under the scrutiny of a High Lord. "Of course he has. Graviel likes to keep an eye on things personally. Especially when it involves our Agito."

"Then why leave?" Nezu asked, his sharp gaze never leaving Kagutsuchi's face.

Kagutsuchi's grin widened slightly, but his eyes—those ancient, golden eyes—gleamed with something unreadable.

"Because he's seen enough. For now."

And with that, Kagutsuchi began walking again, humming under his breath, while the rest of the faculty exchanged uneasy glances, the weight of Graviel's unseen presence lingering long after he was gone.

The kitchen smelled of fresh tea and warm muffins. The soft hum of morning television drifted from the living room, but Izuku barely heard it. He stood frozen in the doorway to the kitchen, his face twitching as he stared at the very sight he had hoped not to see again.

Kagutsuchi was back.

Sitting casually at the table like it was his apartment, the so-called "janitor" sipped tea, his dark coat draped neatly over the back of the chair. His golden eyes caught Izuku's the moment he appeared, and his grin widened in a way that could only be described as deliberately infuriating.

"Morning, kid," Kagutsuchi said cheerfully, holding up a muffin as if in greeting.

Izuku exhaled slowly through his nose, forcing himself to stay calm. "You. Again."

Before Kagutsuchi could answer, Inko appeared from the counter with another plate, positively glowing with delight. "Izuku, don't be rude! Kagutsuchi-san was kind enough to stop by again—and he brought muffins! From that bakery I love so much, no less." She beamed at their guest, who only nodded in thanks.

"Anything for you, Midoriya-san," Kagutsuchi replied smoothly, his tone warm, polite, and maddeningly relaxed. "You deserve to be treated well. Raising a future hero isn't easy."

Izuku's eye twitched. He stepped further into the kitchen, his voice tight, controlled—though it sounded more like a plea than a question. "Why are you here, Kagutsuchi-san? Again?"

Kagutsuchi tilted his head innocently, as if the question itself was unreasonable. "What? Can't I drop by to check on my favorite student? We're practically family now."

"F-Family?!" Izuku sputtered, nearly tripping over his own words.

"Well, sure," Kagutsuchi said, leaning back comfortably in his chair. "Your mom likes me. Right, Midoriya-san?"

"Of course!" Inko said brightly, setting down the plate. "Kagutsuchi-san is always so polite—and thoughtful. You should be grateful to have such nice friends, Izuku."

"Mom!" Izuku practically groaned, pinching the bridge of his nose. "He's not even supposed to be here!"

Kagutsuchi ignored him entirely, instead pouring himself another cup of tea. "Relax, kid. I'm just here for a friendly visit. Besides…" His golden eyes glinted, a sly undercurrent in his voice. "…things are going to get a lot more interesting soon. I thought I'd enjoy the quiet while I still can."

Izuku straightened at that, his irritation slipping into wary curiosity. "What do you mean by that?"

Kagutsuchi smirked faintly, taking a slow sip of tea before answering. "Let's just say, Graviel's probably paying closer attention to you than you think. He's been sending a few of his own to keep an eye on you already. Just in case."

Izuku froze, his mind racing, his earlier annoyance replaced by a low, simmering tension. "Graviel…?"

"Don't worry, kid," Kagutsuchi said casually, as if they weren't talking about a High Lord whose very name sent chills down Izuku's spine. "If he wanted to come down on you personally, you'd know. Until then, enjoy breakfast. Stress is bad for digestion."

Izuku just stared at him, completely torn between throwing him out and demanding more answers.

Meanwhile, Inko smiled warmly as she set a plate in front of him. "Izuku, sit down and eat before it gets cold! Kagutsuchi-san went through all this trouble for us."

Izuku sat stiffly, slowly lowering himself into the chair, his gaze locked on Kagutsuchi, who just grinned back like this was all perfectly normal.

The streets were quiet in the early morning, the soft hum of passing cars and the occasional chirp of birds filling the air. Izuku trudged beside Kagutsuchi, his school bag slung over one shoulder, his expression the very picture of resignation.

Kagutsuchi, on the other hand, strolled casually, one hand in his pocket, the other holding yet another muffin, which he ate at an unhurried pace. Crumbs dotted the dark coat draped over his shoulders, but he didn't seem to care.

Izuku sighed, his tone weary. "You're really going to walk me to school now, too?"

Kagutsuchi smirked sideways at him, taking another bite of his muffin. "What? Can't I enjoy a nice morning stroll with my favorite student?"

"You keep saying that, but…" Izuku muttered under his breath before finally giving up. "Fine. Just… what did you mean back at the apartment? About this… Graviel?"

Kagutsuchi didn't answer immediately. He finished his bite first, brushed crumbs from his fingers, then glanced lazily at Izuku with that unreadable golden gaze.

"Graviel isn't like me," Kagutsuchi began, his tone conversational, almost casual, though there was an undercurrent of seriousness beneath it. "Where I allow my subordinates to mingle with mortals, Graviel doesn't. He runs a tighter ship—strict, methodical. Every move his Lords make is calculated, and they answer directly to him."

Izuku's brows furrowed. "So… why is he watching me?"

"Because you're an anomaly, kid," Kagutsuchi replied simply, taking another bite of his muffin. "An Agito appearing now, in this era? With a power as unrefined and unpredictable as yours? That makes Graviel nervous. He doesn't like variables. Never did."

Izuku looked down at the pavement, his grip on his bag tightening. "Nervous enough to… intervene?"

Kagutsuchi gave a small shrug. "Maybe. Maybe not. Graviel's not the type to act without absolute certainty, and right now, you're still developing. But don't fool yourself—he already has files on you. Probably enough to fill an entire cabinet by now."

Izuku exhaled through his nose, frustration and worry crossing his features. "Great…"

Kagutsuchi chuckled at his expression. "Don't look so grim. If Graviel really wanted to make a move, he wouldn't bother with subtlety. You'd know the second he set foot in Japan. And honestly?" He grinned faintly, finishing the last bite of his muffin. "You're lucky it's him watching you. Other High Lords would've sent a kill squad by now just to be safe."

Izuku gave him a sideways glance, unimpressed. "That's supposed to make me feel better?!"

Kagutsuchi smirked. "Hey, you're still breathing, aren't you? For now, take the win."

They walked in silence for a few moments after that, the weight of Kagutsuchi's words settling heavily in Izuku's chest. Finally, Izuku muttered, almost to himself, "…I don't think I'll ever get used to this."

"Good," Kagutsuchi said, sounding oddly pleased. "Means you're still human. Don't lose that."

Izuku didn't reply. He just stared straight ahead, lips pressed in a thin line, while Kagutsuchi casually unwrapped another muffin from his coat pocket.

The faculty lounge still carried the faint buzz of last night's conversation. Some of the teachers looked a little more tired than usual—Midnight was lazily stirring her coffee, Aizawa had his usual scarf-wrapped slouch but looked slightly more alert than normal, and Present Mic was uncharacteristically quiet, twirling a pen between his fingers.

The revelations Kagutsuchi had casually thrown at them over dinner—God, the Will of Darkness and Light, angels, the end of the world—still lingered heavy in the air.

"Still can't believe he just dropped all that like it was casual dinner talk," Snipe muttered, leaning back in his chair.

"Welcome to my world," Aizawa grumbled, taking a slow sip from his thermos.

The teachers had just started their morning routines when the door slid open with that familiar, almost casual swoosh, and there he was. Kagutsuchi, a bit more nonchalant today, in his usual attire, walking in as if he owned the place. He held a thermos in one hand, and with the other, he casually adjusted his coat, a familiar grin already on his face.

The staff looked up simultaneously, eyes narrowing in varying degrees of curiosity and wariness. It wasn't unusual for Kagutsuchi to make an appearance, but after last night's dinner, after everything he'd shared, it was different today.

Kagutsuchi set the thermos on the table, his usual smug grin still in place, but there was a certain gravity to him now. The conversations from the previous night were still fresh in their minds, but before anyone could speak, Kagutsuchi leaned against the table with a relaxed air.

"Morning, everyone," he said, his voice light, as though it hadn't just dropped a bombshell about the future of the world—or, more importantly, the future of Midoriya Izuku.

"Didn't get enough of terrifying us at dinner?" Present Mic drawled, raising an eyebrow.

Kagutsuchi smirked, placing the muffins in the middle of the table. "Hey, I gave you food last night too. You're welcome." He sat down without asking, leaning back comfortably, his golden eyes lazily sweeping the room.

Nezu, ever polite, was the first to speak. "Kagutsuchi-san, I assume you didn't just come to deliver breakfast."

Midnight, leaning on her elbow, cut in before he could answer, her curiosity clearly still burning from last night. "Since you're so open with us now, can I ask you something? That whole Bible thing you mentioned at dinner—about which parts were real or embellished? You were being cryptic on purpose."

Kagutsuchi grinned at her, chewing a piece of muffin. "Yes, I was. And the answer's still yes and no. Key events happened, but if you expect the details to line up perfectly with your Sunday school books? Sorry, that's just human flair for the dramatic."

"Figures," Aizawa muttered, though Midnight looked both annoyed and intrigued at his deliberately vague answer.

Kagutsuchi shrugged, finishing his bite before continuing, his tone shifting to something more serious. "But enough about scripture. I came because you need to be aware of something else. Graviel's probably aware of Midoriya by now."

The air shifted immediately.

"Graviel," Nezu repeated calmly, his paw tapping lightly on the table. "Another High Lord, correct?"

Kagutsuchi nodded. "My counterpart, in a way. You already know how I run things—my subordinates get more freedom, live among you, eat at your restaurants, teach in your schools if they want. Graviel? Not so much. He keeps his Lords on a tight leash. Doesn't like them mingling with mortals. But trust me, it's not just Japan. They're everywhere. You've only seen the tip of the iceberg."

Present Mic scoffed, rubbing the back of his neck. "Yeah, thanks for that fun little tidbit. 'Lords' everywhere. Fantastic."

Kagutsuchi smiled faintly, unphased. "I understand. It's a lot to take in. But the thing about Graviel, as I said before, is that he's very by the book. He doesn't like things out of order. And he really doesn't like unpredictable variables."

Aizawa, ever the skeptic, leaned back in his chair, arms crossed. "So, why exactly are you telling us all of this? What does he have to do with Izuku?"

Kagutsuchi tilted his head slightly, as if considering his answer carefully. "Graviel, like I said, runs things with a tight hand. He doesn't like being kept in the dark. That's why, even though I've allowed my subordinates to interact with humans—blend in, live among them—Graviel would rather keep things strictly professional. Which is why he's been keeping an eye on Midoriya. You may not have noticed, but he's been watched for a while now."

There was a heavy silence that settled over the room. The teachers exchanged uneasy glances, the magnitude of the situation becoming clearer.

Kagutsuchi leaned forward even further, his expression sharpening. "Now, as for Graviel himself—well, he's always been very concerned with the proper balance. He's a High Lord, and like all High Lords, he has a certain power that the lower-tier Lords just don't have. You'll know when he's around. He doesn't like to hide." He paused, clearly savoring their reactions. "And he's watching Izuku now. Not to fight him—not yet, anyway. But to see what kind of 'Agito' he becomes."

The room felt colder as Kagutsuchi's words sank in. A tension hung in the air.

Nezu finally broke the silence, his voice calm but firm. "You've mentioned Graviel before, but now it sounds like you're warning us."

Kagutsuchi's gaze didn't waver. "I wouldn't call it a warning. More like an introduction. Things are going to change. They already are. I wouldn't be surprised if Graviel showed up in person soon. But that's not the issue right now. The issue is what happens when Midoriya's power becomes undeniable."

Midnight looked at him with concern. "And what happens then?"

Kagutsuchi paused, setting his thermos down slowly, a shift in his demeanor. "Then we'll see who steps up. Whether it's Izuku or someone else, there will be those who will test him. And some of them... will not be as kind as me."

He stood up, brushing crumbs from his coat, his usual playful smirk back in place. "But that's something for another day. Don't worry. I'm just here to keep an eye on things. We'll see how he handles it. Until then, enjoy the muffins."

And with that, Kagutsuchi casually walked toward the door, leaving the room in stunned silence.

The teachers exchanged glances again, the weight of Kagutsuchi's words settling heavily on their shoulders. Something was coming—something none of them could fully prepare for. And they all knew it.

The soft hum of conversation filled the staff room as the faculty enjoyed their lunch. Papers rustled, coffee steamed, and the sunlight filtering through the blinds cast warm stripes across the table. Kagutsuchi, now back in his janitor's uniform, sat at the far corner of the room, leaning back in his chair with his feet crossed. A neatly folded newspaper was in his hands, the picture of casual indifference, as if last night's dinner conversation hadn't shaken the entire faculty to its core.

Nemuri, however, hadn't been able to stop thinking about it. The questions that had been buzzing in her mind since Kagutsuchi's dinner revelations were only growing louder, gnawing at her curiosity. Finally, as lunch break settled into a lull, she stood from her chair, bento in hand, and crossed the room toward him.

Kagutsuchi looked up briefly over the edge of his paper, one golden eye narrowing slightly in mild curiosity. "Midnight-san," he said casually, lowering the paper just enough to look at her properly. "You need something?"

Nemuri bit her lip, debating whether to ask what was on her mind. But curiosity finally won out, and she sat down across from him. "Actually, yes," she admitted, leaning forward slightly. "You said a lot of things last night, but you were vague about how you and your… kind live among people. So tell me—how do Lords just… blend in so easily?"

Kagutsuchi tilted his head slightly, folding the paper neatly before placing it on the table. "Nothing special," he said with a shrug, his tone maddeningly casual. "We just do. Some of us like to wear disguises, sure, but after Quirks started becoming common, it stopped being necessary. A horned man, a woman with scales, or a guy with wings? People just assume it's a Quirk now. Makes things easier for us."

Nemuri frowned, her mind clearly turning over the deeper implications. She hesitated before asking the next question, her voice softer now. "And what about… relationships? I mean… you all live far longer than us, don't you?"

Kagutsuchi looked at her for a moment, then gave a small, knowing smile. "Limited lifespan?" he said, finishing her thought for her. "Yes, that's a fair way to put it. Lords can age their bodies if they want to appear natural, but dying? No. That doesn't happen. When people around us get suspicious, or when the time comes, we quietly… move on. New names, new identities, new lives. Rinse and repeat."

Nemuri's brow furrowed at that, her tone almost sympathetic now. "So you just… keep going? Never stopping? Never really staying with anyone?"

Kagutsuchi didn't answer immediately. His gaze softened, but there was a faint weight behind his calm smile. "That's the price, Midnight-san. It's the way it's always been."

But Nemuri's curiosity still wasn't sated. She leaned in slightly, biting her lip before asking, "Can you… have children?"

The staff room went quiet at the question. Even Aizawa, who had been pretending to nap nearby, cracked one eye open.

Kagutsuchi, however, didn't seem offended. He chuckled lightly, almost amused by the bluntness. "Yes, we can," he replied without hesitation. "But they're not like us. No divine power. No Agito. No enhanced lifespan. Just regular humans. Imagine the chaos if they inherited even a fraction of what we are." He smirked faintly. "A nightmare for everyone involved."

Nemuri blinked, a mix of fascination and discomfort flickering across her face. "So… they live normal lives?"

"Completely normal," Kagutsuchi said firmly, taking a sip of tea from a cup he'd swiped from the faculty counter earlier. "They're not us. And that's a good thing."

Nemuri sat back slowly, processing the information, her earlier curiosity tempered by the realization of just how different Kagutsuchi's existence was from theirs. The silence lingered for a moment before Kagutsuchi casually picked up his paper again, leaning back in his chair as if the conversation hadn't even happened.

"Any more questions, or can I go back to my reading?" he asked lightly, glancing at her over the edge of the paper.

Nemuri, for once, had no immediate response.

The sunlight poured through the wide windows of Class 1-A's room, casting warm streaks of gold across the polished desks. The day's lessons had just wrapped up, and a hum of chatter filled the air as students stretched, packed their bags, and gathered in small groups to talk.

The Sports Festival—this year's Sports Festival—was the topic on everyone's lips.

"I heard it's going to be huge this time!" Mina Ashido said excitedly, practically bouncing in her seat. "Way bigger than last year's! They're even adding extra camera crews to broadcast to more regions across Japan. Can you believe it? We're gonna be on TV!"

"Kinda nerve-wracking, don't you think?" Tsuyu Asui croaked from her desk, tilting her head slightly. "But I guess that's the point. This is how Pro Heroes scout new talent."

Kaminari leaned back in his chair, hands behind his head and a grin plastered on his face. "Exactly! This is our chance to shine! Think about it—internships, agency offers, maybe even a chance to work under some of the top heroes. We just gotta crush it out there."

"'Crush it out there?'" Jirou raised an eyebrow, tapping her pencil against her notebook. "You'll be lucky if you don't short-circuit yourself halfway through."

"Hey!" Kaminari shot back, mock-offended, which only earned a snicker from Kirishima.

Across the room, Todoroki sat in his usual quiet composure, but even he seemed contemplative, his fingers tapping the desk absently. "The Sports Festival isn't just for show. It's a proving ground. We'll be competing against the best students U.A. has to offer."

"That's the point," Kirishima said, his grin wide and sharp with excitement. "This is where we show everyone we're future pros. Manly pros!"

Amid all the chatter, Izuku sat at his desk, quietly listening, notebook open but untouched. He watched his classmates—some nervous, some excited, some both—and felt the same anticipatory weight settling over him.

Uraraka slid into the desk beside him, leaning in slightly with a soft smile. "You excited, Izuku?" she asked. "You've been training so hard lately… this could be huge for you."

Izuku blinked, caught slightly off guard by the question. "Ah, yeah… I guess I am," he admitted, rubbing the back of his neck. "It's just… a lot of eyes are going to be on us. On me. And with…" He trailed off, choosing his words carefully. With what I am now.

But before his thoughts could spiral, Iida turned around in his seat, his usual sharp gestures in full force. "Midoriya-kun! You should consider this an opportunity to show the world what you're capable of! The Sports Festival is not just about winning; it's about demonstrating resolve and the heart of a hero to all of Japan!"

Izuku managed a small smile at that, the earnestness in Iida's voice strangely reassuring. "You're right, Iida-kun. I… I'll do my best."

From across the room, Mineta's head popped up, his tone far less noble. "Forget all that hero stuff. Do you know how many pro heroines are gonna be watching this broadcast? This is my chance to show them my skills and charm!"

"Charm?" Yaoyorozu repeated, arching an eyebrow in disbelief. "What charm?"

As the class burst into laughter, the mood lightened, the excitement growing thicker in the air. Despite the nerves, there was a shared understanding: this was their time to prove themselves.

Izuku, watching his classmates joke and plan, felt something inside him settle. The Sports Festival… It's going to be different this year. For all of us.

The sun had already dipped low, spilling long shadows across the quiet U.A. campus. Most students had gone home, and the faculty was beginning to disperse, the usual end-of-day chatter replaced with a tired, contented quiet.

Nemuri Kayama stepped out of the staff building, her heels clicking lightly against the stone path as she adjusted her bag over her shoulder. She let out a sigh, rolling her shoulders. "What a day…" she muttered to herself, already thinking of a long bath when she got home.

"Going somewhere, Kayama-sensei?"

The smooth, calm voice pulled her attention, and she turned her head to see Kagutsuchi leaning casually against the base of a lamppost. He was dressed differently from his janitor's uniform, instead wearing his long, dark coat over a gray sweater and black trousers, the ensemble giving him a composed, almost understatedly stylish air.

Nemuri blinked, her lips quirking into a sly grin as she tilted her head. "Well, look at you. Off-duty Kagutsuchi, huh? You clean up nice."

He pushed himself off the lamppost with his usual unhurried grace, his golden eyes briefly catching the last of the sunlight. "I thought I'd walk you home," he said simply, no inflection, as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

Nemuri raised an eyebrow, mock suspicion flashing across her face. "Oh? Walking me home? How gentlemanly of you. Should I be worried?" she teased, her voice playfully accusing. "You're not secretly trying to sweep me off my feet, are you?"

Kagutsuchi didn't rise to the bait. Instead, he gave her a long, quiet look, then wordlessly gestured with a small motion of his hand for her to start walking.

Nemuri blinked, caught a little off guard by his silence, before chuckling under her breath. "Huh. Not even gonna deny it, huh? Fine, fine, lead the way, mystery man."

She fell into step beside him, the two of them beginning their walk along the quiet path leading off campus. The air between them was calm, a strange but comfortable contrast to Nemuri's usual playful energy and Kagutsuchi's ever-steady composure.

For a while, neither of them spoke, the only sounds being the rustle of leaves in the light evening breeze and the soft tap of Nemuri's heels against the pavement. But as the campus buildings faded behind them, Nemuri gave him a sideways glance, curiosity flickering in her eyes.

"...You're full of surprises, you know that? You don't strike me as the type who goes out of his way to be, well… neighborly."

Kagutsuchi glanced at her, his expression neutral, unreadable as always. "You've been asking questions. A lot of them. Thought you might want a quieter chance to ask more."

Nemuri paused for a moment, then grinned, brushing a lock of hair behind her ear. "Hah. So you are a gentleman, after all."

Kagutsuchi didn't comment. He just kept walking, his hands slipping into the pockets of his coat, the faintest ghost of a smile tugging at his lips.

The path leading away from U.A. wound through quiet residential streets, the sun dipping lower, painting the sky in hues of amber and violet. Nemuri walked alongside Kagutsuchi, hands swinging lazily at her sides, her playful smirk ever-present, while Kagutsuchi kept his hands tucked in his coat pockets, his posture relaxed, gaze forward.

For a while, the conversation was casual, mostly Nemuri filling the silence with light remarks about the day. But as they moved into a quieter street, her tone shifted, curiosity flickering in her violet eyes.

"So… since you're humoring me with all these little secrets lately," Nemuri began, glancing sideways at him, "I've got to ask the big one."

Kagutsuchi raised a brow slightly but said nothing, waiting.

Nemuri tilted her head, her smirk softening into genuine interest. "You've been around for… what, thousands of years? Have you ever had someone? Y'know… a family? A lover?"

Kagutsuchi's expression didn't change immediately, but his golden eyes softened, thoughtful. Then, to her surprise, he gave a short, amused laugh. "No. Not really."

Nemuri blinked. "Not really? That's a vague answer for a guy who's supposed to have been walking among us for centuries."

He chuckled again, though there was a faint, embarrassed edge to it this time. "I did… come close. Once. A long time ago. Tried to go on a date with a human woman."

That instantly hooked her, her curiosity spiking. Nemuri practically turned to face him while walking, her grin widening. "No way. Kagutsuchi, on a date? Now this I have to hear. What was it like?"

Kagutsuchi sighed, glancing away as if already regretting bringing it up, but he humored her nonetheless. "We were standing on a cliffside. The moon was bright, waves crashing below. It was… what you humans call romantic, I suppose."

Nemuri leaned closer, clearly enjoying every second of this. "And?"

His expression turned vaguely sheepish, his voice lowering as if he found the whole memory ridiculous. "She tried to kiss me."

Nemuri's eyes sparkled with delight. "Tried to kiss you? That's adorable. What happened?"

Kagutsuchi hesitated for a moment, then sighed. "I… asked her what she was doing."

There was silence for half a second before Nemuri burst into laughter, loud and unrestrained. She bent forward slightly, clutching her stomach as she wheezed out between laughs. "You—you didn't know what a kiss was?! Oh, this is priceless! Mister mysterious angel, all high and mighty, totally clueless about a kiss! Oh, you're killing me!"

Kagutsuchi exhaled through his nose, clearly embarrassed but letting her have her laugh, the faintest twitch of a smirk tugging at his lips despite himself.

Nemuri wiped at her eyes, still chuckling. "I can't believe this. The great Kagutsuchi, foiled by human romance 101."

"Like I said," he muttered dryly, "I'd never tried before. I learned afterward. Eventually."

Nemuri grinned at him, her laughter softening into a playful smile. "Oh, don't worry, you'll never live this down with me. I'm telling you right now."

Kagutsuchi sighed but didn't argue, letting the sound of her laughter fill the quiet evening air as they continued their walk.

The walk eventually ended at Nemuri's apartment building, a modest, well-kept complex tucked into a quieter part of the city. The sky had deepened into streaks of indigo and crimson, the first hints of night settling in. Kagutsuchi stood with his hands in his coat pockets at the bottom of the stairs leading to her door, his posture relaxed but his golden eyes watching her with that ever-calm, unreadable expression.

Nemuri, still smiling from their earlier conversation, paused at the steps, turning to face him. Her smirk softened into something more curious, almost… thoughtful.

"You know," she began, leaning against the railing casually, "for someone who's been around as long as you, it's kind of sad you've never tried to really have… y'know, something. A family. Someone waiting for you at home."

Kagutsuchi tilted his head slightly, not answering immediately.

Nemuri crossed her arms, her tone softer now, less teasing. "Do you ever regret that? Not trying harder to… I don't know, live a little more like the rest of us?"

For a moment, Kagutsuchi said nothing. His gaze drifted upward, past her, to the deepening sky. His expression was unreadable, but his voice, when it came, was quiet—thoughtful.

"Regret…?" he echoed, then shook his head slightly. "Not really. It's not… for us. Not in the way humans do it. We live too long, Nemuri. Far too long. The ones we get close to—" he paused, his tone dipping ever so slightly, "—they're gone before we even realize how much we've started to care. Starting something like that, only to watch it all end… over and over again…? No. That's not for me."

Nemuri's smirk faded completely, replaced by a quiet, contemplative look. She hadn't expected him to answer so honestly.

But then Kagutsuchi gave a small, almost self-deprecating smile. "Still… I suppose that's why I tried that date, once. Call it curiosity. Or maybe…" His golden eyes softened just a little as he glanced back at her. "Maybe some small part of me wanted to understand you humans better."

Nemuri's lips curved into a faint smile, gentler this time. "…And instead you confused the poor woman by asking what a kiss was."

Kagutsuchi chuckled under his breath, a soft, warm sound. "Something like that, yes."

For a moment, the two of them just stood there, the quiet hum of the city filling the silence. Finally, Nemuri pushed off the railing, stepping back toward the stairs.

"Well," she said, her teasing smirk making a slow return, "maybe one day you'll give it another shot. Who knows? Might even surprise yourself."

Kagutsuchi raised a brow but didn't answer, just watched as she climbed the steps.

"Goodnight, Kagutsuchi," Nemuri said, giving him a small wave before disappearing inside.

Kagutsuchi stood there for a long moment, looking up at the door, his expression unreadable. Then, with a faint sigh, he turned and began walking back down the street, his dark coat swaying with each step.