The golden light of dawn spilled across the battered landing pad, painting twisted metal and scorched concrete in shades of orange and rose. The air, still acrid with ozone and burnt earth, hummed with a fading residual energy. Izuku and Toshinori, forearms still clasped, finally let go, their silence heavy with the profound weight of exhaustion and the quiet euphoria of relief. Steam curled off Toshinori's frail frame, a faint, ethereal reminder of the colossal power he had just expended, while Izuku's torn suit and the deep, persistent hum in his sore muscles bore silent witness to the brutal toll of their desperate fight. Every breath was a conscious effort, every movement a dull ache.

They turned their gazes to Wolfram's hulking steel form, now a grotesque, broken sculpture of twisted metal, unmoving amidst the debris. The cracked device fused to his head sparked once, a final, dying gasp, before going utterly dead. He was unconscious, a defeated titan, but undeniably alive—a simple truth that brought the two heroes a small, quiet satisfaction settling deep in their bones.

"He's out cold," Izuku rasped, his voice rough, scanning the wreckage for any lingering sign of movement. The only answer was the distant, mournful cry of gulls circling high above the bay.

Toshinori offered a weary but genuine smile, a tired crinkle at the corners of his eyes. "A formidable opponent indeed… but no match for true heroism." His gaze softened, resting on Izuku. "You fought exceptionally well, my boy. Beyond what I could have asked."

Izuku's chest tightened at the praise, a warmth spreading through his exhaustion. Just then, the faint wail of sirens began to grow louder, carried on the cool morning breeze, a promise of order returning to the chaos.

"They're here," he murmured, the words almost lost in the rising sound.

The rhythmic chop of helicopter blades intensified, filling the air with a powerful thrum. Police choppers descended first, their powerful searchlights sweeping across the landing pad like inquisitive eyes, followed swiftly by a sleek Hero Public Safety Commission transport. Within minutes, the area, once a battleground, buzzed with the organized chaos of rescue and recovery—tactical teams moving with precise efficiency, medics rushing to Wolfram's side, and various Pro Heroes assessing the widespread damage with grim faces.

Detective Tsukauchi was among the first off the transport, his trench coat snapping dramatically in the rotor wash. His sharp, observant gaze swept across the scene of destruction before fixing with professional intensity on Toshinori and Izuku.

"All Might. Midoriya," he called, his voice a steady anchor amidst the swirling wind, his underlying relief buried beneath layers of professional focus. "Are you two alright? We tracked massive, unprecedented energy spikes from this location."

"We're fine, Tsukauchi," Toshinori replied, his voice firm despite his visible fatigue, a heroic resolve still echoing within it. "Wolfram's down. The threat is neutralized."

Tsukauchi's gaze lingered on the villain's unconscious, broken body, then swept over the sheer scale of the destruction. "So it was him. This level of devastation… it's far worse than anticipated." He glanced at the fractured platform, a testament to the brutal power unleashed. "Still intact, though—remarkably—thanks to your intervention."

Izuku forced himself to speak, fighting off the heavy, leaden feeling in his limbs. "He used a Quirk Amplification device. It boosted his steel Quirk way beyond its natural limits. It was… terrifying."

Tsukauchi's brows knitted together in a deep frown. "Amplification tech… profoundly dangerous. This changes things." He signaled forensic teams to immediately secure the broken device, their movements swift and precise.

Other heroes arrived; Endeavor, a towering figure of flame, gave All Might a curt, almost imperceptible nod of acknowledgment, his flames flickering low, a silent salute. The island, once a shining symbol of scientific progress, now stood roped off like a colossal crime scene, yet amidst the wreckage, the victory, hard-won and absolute, was undeniable.

Later, in the sterile quiet of a medical tent, Toshinori sat hunched, wrapped in a thick, comforting blanket, while a medic meticulously cleaned a shallow, jagged cut on Izuku's arm. The frenetic rush of adrenaline had finally receded, replaced by a profound, almost bone-deep exhaustion that settled into every fiber of their beings.

Tsukauchi stepped inside, his notepad already open, pen poised. "All Might. Midoriya. It's time for the debrief."

Toshinori simply nodded, a silent command. "Go ahead, Detective."

They laid out the harrowing details of the infiltration, Wolfram's insidious plan, and the brutal, desperate fight in clipped, tired voices, each word a small effort. Tsukauchi listened intently, his pen scratching steadily across the paper, capturing every detail. When they finished, a rare softness entered his voice. "You saved countless lives tonight. We'll secure the device and launch a full investigation into Samuel Abraham's actions. For now, rest. You've both done more than enough."

He left, and a profound, almost heavy silence settled again, broken only by the distant hum of medical equipment.

Outside the tent, Toshinori found David Shield seated on the cold, concrete stairwell leading to the reception hall. He was hunched forward, his glasses crooked on his nose, staring blankly at nothing, a figure of utter despair.

Toshinori sat carefully beside him, the concrete cold against his own weary frame. "David. How are you holding up, my friend?"

David gave a weak, hollow chuckle, devoid of any humor. "Holding up? Sam and I met in high school, Toshinori. He was my best man. We were… we were brothers. And now…" His voice wavered, thick with unshed tears. "Why? Why would he throw it all away? Everything we believed in?"

Toshinori placed a steady, comforting hand on his shoulder, a silent anchor. "Sometimes, David, people lose their way. They make choices that defy understanding. But that doesn't erase what you had. His choices were his own, and they don't rewrite the man you knew, the friendship you shared."

David's voice dropped to a barely audible whisper. "I keep wondering if I should've seen it coming. If there was something I missed, something I could have done."

Toshinori gently shook his head. "You've always stood for hope, David. For progress and for the betterment of humanity. That hasn't changed. Sam's fall is his tragedy—it is not yours to carry."

David nodded slightly, a flicker of gratitude softening the profound sorrow in his eyes. "Thank you, Toshinori. Truly."

They sat in silence, the low, persistent hum of rescue efforts filling the distance, two old friends bound by shared loss and a quiet, enduring resilience.

Izuku pushed aside a medical tent flap, the soft light within revealing Melissa. She sat on a cot, still in her torn party dress, a thick, comforting blanket draped around her slender shoulders. She looked up as he entered, her eyes wide and a little haunted.

"Are you okay?" they asked simultaneously, their voices echoing each other.

They paused, then a soft, weary laugh escaped them both, the immense heaviness of the night loosening its grip just a little.

"I'm fine," Melissa said, a fragile smile gracing her lips despite her obvious exhaustion. "A few bruises, that's all. You?"

Izuku rubbed the back of his neck, his cheeks coloring faintly. "Tired, but… okay. Mostly."

Melissa tilted her head, her curiosity overcoming her weariness. "I heard you were there at the very end. How did you… how did you stop Wolfram?"

Izuku sat beside her, recounting the terrifying climax of the battle in hushed tones, omitting the more fantastical elements of his Agito form. When he finished, Melissa exhaled slowly, her eyes wide with awe and a hint of disbelief. "Wow. I… I wish I could've been there to see it."

Izuku shook his head quickly, a shiver running through him at the memory. "No, you wouldn't. We barely made it—if we'd been off by even a little, Wolfram would've crushed us both. It was… too close."

Melissa brushed back a loose strand of hair, her gaze dropping to her hands. "Still… thank you. Both of you. You and Uncle Might. You saved everyone."

As Izuku started to stand, a sudden, vulnerable gesture, Melissa bit her lip and caught his sleeve, her fingers lightly brushing his arm. "Could you… could you stay a little longer? I just… I just need someone to talk to. I don't want to be alone right now."

Izuku blinked, surprised by the raw honesty in her voice, then sat back down without a word. Melissa kept her gaze low, her fingers lingering on his sleeve, a silent plea.

"I can't stop thinking about Sam," she said quietly, her voice trembling slightly. "He was always so kind to me. Like… like an uncle. I just can't understand why he did this. Why he would betray everything. Did he hate us? Or was it all… all just lies?" Her voice cracked on the last word.

Izuku shook his head gently. "I don't think it was all lies, Melissa. People… people can change. Sometimes they make bad choices, even if they were good once. It doesn't mean the good they did before wasn't real. And… even at the end, he didn't want you to get hurt. He tried to get you away from Wolfram before… before things got too bad for him."

Melissa released his sleeve, her expression softening, a glimmer of hope in her eyes. "I want to believe that. That the Sam I knew wasn't completely gone. That there's still some good in him, somewhere."

Izuku gave a small, earnest smile, a silent promise. "The fact you still care, even after all this… that says a lot about you, Melissa. About your heart."

Melissa looked up, meeting his eyes, and Izuku felt the profound weight of everything settle in his chest. He promised himself, right then, to keep fighting, to keep pushing forward, so that moments like this—moments of hope, of connection—could last. Some of the sadness eased from her face, replaced by a fragile sense of peace.

Class 1-A gathered near the reception hall, a motley crew of bandaged, bruised, and utterly exhausted teenagers, yet standing together, a silent testament to their shared ordeal. Kirishima gave a low whistle, a grin splitting his weary face. "Man, what a crazy night. But hey, we made it through, didn't we?"

Yaoyorozu folded her arms, a frown still etched on her face. "It was reckless. Incredibly so. We were lucky."

Jirou shifted uncomfortably, wincing as she adjusted her bandaged arm. "Yeah, maybe. But… we kept people safe. We really did. That has to count for something."

A seasoned Rescue Hero approached them, his expression tired but respectful, nodding firmly. "You kids did well. Incredibly risky, yes, but you protected civilians, and you held the line. That's what counts in the end. That's what makes a hero."

Kaminari grinned weakly, a spark of his usual energy returning. "Hear that, guys? We're basically pros now! Just gotta get our licenses."

Iida straightened, his posture rigid despite his fatigue, his voice steady and resolute. "We acted because it was right. Because it was our duty. That's what heroes do, Kaminari. That is the core of it."

Bakugo leaned against a pillar, arms crossed, a familiar, almost triumphant smirk playing on his lips. "Damn right, Four Eyes. Damn right."

Hours later, as the sun climbed higher and the initial chaos subsided into methodical cleanup, a small, somber meeting was convened in a temporary command center set up within the island's main research facility. Detective Tsukauchi sat at the head of a long, makeshift table, flanked by the assembled UA staff: Principal Nezu, his small form radiating an unusual seriousness; a visibly weary Eraserhead, his eyes still red-rimmed; and an unusually subdued Present Mic. Across from them sat Kagutsuchi, his presence radiating an unsettling calm.

"Thank you for joining us, Kagutsuchi," Tsukauchi began, his voice devoid of his usual warmth, replaced by a professional coolness. "We need to discuss the events of last night, specifically the arrival and… behavior of Graviel."

Kagutsuchi inclined his head slightly, his expression unreadable. "Of course. What would you like to know?"

Principal Nezu spoke, his usual cheerful demeanor replaced by a grave tone. "Graviel's presence was… significant. His unauthorized entry into a secured zone, and the unnerving ease with which he neutralized a Nomu that burst into the hall. While we appreciate his intervention, the sheer, effortless power he displayed was concerning. We need to understand the parameters of his involvement."

Kagutsuchi's gaze swept over the worried faces, his expression remaining unreadable. "Ah, yes. Graviel. You are referring to his arrival and his… intervention." He paused, letting the words hang in the air. "You must understand, that was Graviel… when he is being civil."

A collective gasp, subtle but distinct, rippled through the room. Present Mic, who had been leaning back in his chair, shot upright, his eyes wide.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa!" Hizashi exclaimed, his voice losing its usual boisterous edge, replaced by genuine shock. "If that was him being civil, then I definitely don't want to piss the guy off! What's he like when he's not civil? Does he just level cities for fun?!"

Kagutsuchi's expression remained calm, though his eyes held a serious depth. "That was, indeed, a restrained demonstration of his capabilities. It is… advisable to maintain a cordial relationship with him." The room fell silent, the implications of his words settling heavily on everyone present.

Principal Nezu, his small paws resting on the table, leaned forward slightly, his gaze fixed on Kagutsuchi. "Given the… nature of your associates, Kagutsuchi, and the events that seem to follow them, the UA staff has a pressing concern. What are Graviel's intentions regarding our institution? Our students?"

Kagutsuchi's calm expression didn't waver. He met Nezu's intense stare without a flicker of discomfort. "If you are worried about Graviel mounting an all-out assault on your school, Principal, you can put those fears to rest. That is not his way." He paused, a subtle, almost imperceptible shift in his posture. "Graviel is, above all else, a creature of order and decorum. He operates within a very specific set of principles. He would not risk something so overtly reckless as a direct, destructive attack on a public institution like U.A. It would be… beneath him, and it would disrupt the delicate balance he values."

Aizawa, who had been listening intently, finally spoke, his voice low and raspy, his eyes narrowed on Kagutsuchi. "That's all well and good, Kagutsuchi. But what about Midoriya? Graviel is still targeting him, isn't he? His presence here, his comments about 'observing the boy'… it's not subtle."

Kagutsuchi's expression remained unreadable, a faint sigh escaping him. "Graviel has… an interest in Izuku Midoriya, yes. An ongoing interest." He paused, allowing the implication to settle. "However, if your concern is that Graviel would simply move to kill the boy, then what you witnessed last night was not even a fraction of what he is capable of. Graviel has no incentive to act in such a way, not yet." He met Aizawa's gaze directly. "So long as Izuku does not evolve past a certain point—a point where the planet itself is no longer able to contain such power—then Graviel will certainly remain an observer. His methods, as I said, are precise. He will not risk destabilizing the very order he seeks to maintain." The air in the room seemed to thicken with the unspoken weight of Kagutsuchi's words, leaving the UA staff with a chilling understanding of the true scale of the power they were dealing with.

Nemuri, who had been uncharacteristically quiet, finally broke the heavy silence, her gaze sharp as she looked at Kagutsuchi. "Earlier, when Graviel left… he mentioned an 'annual meeting' with you. What exactly is the deal with that, Kagutsuchi?"

Kagutsuchi's expression remained unreadable, his eyes holding a distant quality. "It's exactly what it sounds like, Nemuri. An annual meeting between High Lords." He paused, allowing his gaze to drift over the tense faces of the UA staff. "It's less about discussing recent events, and more about the actions to undertake regarding said events, and the implications of those actions."

A cold realization dawned on the faces of the UA staff. The unspoken question hung heavy in the air: Could this be where they decide Midoriya's fate?

Kagutsuchi seemed to sense their collective thought, a faint, almost imperceptible shift in his posture. "Relax," he said, his voice calm, though it carried an undercurrent of authority. "If Izuku Midoriya's actual termination was precisely what they were going to discuss, I assure you, I would know. And it would not be a topic for casual conversation." He met their gazes, one by one. "No. The meeting will be mostly about who gets an accolade for good performance, who gets to direct this year's company play, and of course, Agito set for actual termination—those who are without control and are suffering from unstable mutations. That, and more."

There was an intense moment of silence before Hizashi broke it, leaning forward with wide eyes. "…You guys have company plays? Like, full-on stage shows? Costumes and everything?"

Before Kagutsuchi could even answer, Principal Nezu's small paws tapped the table, his eyes narrowing. "These 'other Agito' you refer to, Kagutsuchi… where are they located? Are they contained?"

Kagutsuchi's gaze remained flat, devoid of emotion. "That information, Principal, I am not authorized to disclose. The other Agito I'm referring to are set for termination for a reason. They possess unpredictable mutations that might veer out of control at any given moment." He paused, his voice dropping slightly, a chilling undertone. "At least Midoriya's development is stable. With the others… the next day, the Earth might just be cracked in two."

The UA staff stared, stunned into silence. Present Mic slowly raised a hand, his mouth twitching into a grin despite the gravity of the moment. "Okay, okay, but seriously—company plays? Like, do you guys rehearse between all the world-ending stuff?"

Nemuri groaned, rubbing her temple, though a reluctant smirk tugged at her lips. "Only you would latch onto that, Hizashi."

Even Aizawa gave him a tired side-eye, muttering, "Focus, Mic."

Kagutsuchi, unfazed, inclined his head slightly. "Yes. They rehearse. Presentation is important. It is… tradition. The last one I directed was back in 1985—a musical version of Back to the Future. It became so popular in Heaven that it was requested for encore performances for months."

Present Mic stared at him, mouth dropping open before breaking into a disbelieving grin. "Hold up—Back to the Future: The Musical? In Heaven? That's… wow, that's insane! Did you sing, too? Please tell me you sang."

Nemuri actually snorted, covering her mouth with the back of her hand. "Of course that's what you'd focus on, Hizashi."

Aizawa sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. "Only you would get hung up on that."

Kagutsuchi, as unflappable as ever, gave a single, dignified nod. "Yes. I performed as well. It was… well-received."

Present Mic let out a laugh, half-amused, half-incredulous. "Man, that's equal parts awesome and terrifying."

The implications of Kagutsuchi's words, however, lingered heavily beneath the brief levity, far more chilling than any direct threat.

Nemuri's smirk faded as she leaned back in her chair, crossing her arms. "Jokes aside… this whole 'Agito termination' thing doesn't sit right with me." Her voice was firm, her usual playful tone replaced by something sharper. "I get the danger, but ending lives like it's just another day at the office? That's not something I can just nod along with."

Kagutsuchi's gaze shifted to her, steady and unreadable, though there was a flicker of something—acknowledgment, perhaps even a hint of respect. His words came measured, his tone calm but ironclad. "It is never casual, Nemuri Kayama. Every Agito slated for termination stands one step from catastrophe. We do not enjoy it, and we do not take it lightly. But hesitation has ended worlds before. Mercy, for them, is letting them exist only until that existence threatens everything else." The air grew heavier, his certainty settling over the room like a lead weight.

Nemuri leaned back slightly, arms still crossed, her frown unwavering. "They're still people, Kagutsuchi. Lives. Not just ticking bombs you throw away when they scare you. I get why you do it, but you talk like there's never even a chance at another path. That's hard to accept."

Kagutsuchi inclined his head, his voice losing some of its edge. "And I understand why you feel that way. I wish I could tell you there was always another path. But on our side, every hesitation carries a cost you can't imagine. We carry it, Nemuri. We live with it every day. But we cannot afford to pretend it isn't there."

A long, awkward beat of silence followed, the weight of the discussion hanging heavy in the air. Then Hizashi, never one to let a room stay quiet for long, leaned forward with a lopsided grin. "So… uh… did you ever direct a sequel?"

Groans erupted almost in unison—Nemuri burying her face in her hands, Aizawa letting out an audible sigh, and even Nezu pinching the bridge of his tiny nose. Kagutsuchi, for his part, didn't so much as blink, only giving a small, almost imperceptible nod. "Yes. But it was not as well-received."

The return voyage was quiet, the gentle sway of the cruise ship a soothing contrast to the chaos they'd left behind. Izuku stood alone at the railing, the sea breeze tugging at his hair as he watched I-Island slowly recede into the distance, its once-bright silhouette now just a dark shape against the horizon.

His mind wandered back to earlier, when he'd said his goodbyes. Melissa had been waiting by the docks, her hair neatly brushed despite the lingering signs of exhaustion, now dressed in comfortable casual clothes instead of her party attire. They'd stood awkwardly for a moment, exchanging shy smiles.

"Take care of yourself, Izuku," Melissa had said gently, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear. "You've already done so much… just, stay safe, okay?"

Izuku had nodded, cheeks warming. "You too, Melissa. I… I hope we can meet again, someday. Under better circumstances."

She had smiled, soft and genuine. "I'd like that." And then, after a brief pause, her face had flushed as she leaned in, pressing a quick, warm kiss to his cheek. "For everything you did," she'd whispered.

Izuku had frozen, eyes wide, before stammering something incoherent as she pulled back, equally red-faced but smiling.

Now, leaning against the railing, he touched his cheek with his fingers, a faint smile tugging at his lips despite the exhaustion. "Yeah… I'd like that too," he murmured to himself as the island disappeared from view.

"Enjoying the view, or just daydreaming, boy?" a familiar voice teased from behind.

Izuku jumped slightly, turning to see Kagutsuchi leaning casually against the railing a few feet away. The man's usual composed demeanor carried a hint of amusement.

"I—uh—just thinking," Izuku stammered.

Kagutsuchi's gaze lingered on him, sharp but not unkind. "Graviel and I sensed it, you know. That new form of yours. What did it feel like?"

Izuku blinked, glancing down at his hands. "…Like I was one with the wind," he admitted slowly. "My movements felt lighter, freer… but—" He clenched his left hand into a fist tightly, staring at it. "It was only slightly weaker than Ground and Flame. And even then, I had to push myself to the absolute limit just to put a dent in Wolfram."

Kagutsuchi gave a low hum, thoughtful. "A fitting description. So, what are you going to call it?"

Izuku stared at his fist for a moment longer, his voice barely above a mumble. "Storm Form."

Kagutsuchi's lips curled into the faintest of smirks. "Storm Form… fitting. Keep refining it, boy. You'll need it."

Far away, in the shadows of a dimly lit lair, All For One sat in silence as a distorted voice crackled over a secured line. "Wolfram has failed," the contact reported.

All For One didn't so much as shift, his tone smooth and unsurprised. "As expected. The man's ambition always outweighed his competence. And," he added, a faint note of amusement creeping in, "I suspected he planned to betray me over the Quirk Amplification Device. Rumors in the underworld made that much clear. Samuel Abraham was careless… almost eager to leak its existence. I simply followed the trail."

The voice on the other end hesitated before speaking again. "Do you want surveillance footage from I-Island, Master?"

"I do," All For One replied. "Show me everything from that night. I want to see what my old friend has been up to. Toshinori's recovery… if the earlier reports were true, it is far too convenient to be natural."

A pause, then the contact answered, almost apologetically, "Impossible for now. The island is on full lockdown. Nothing leaves until the debris is cleared."

All For One chuckled, low and patient. "That's fine. I've already placed agents there. They'll bring me what I need soon enough. And then," he leaned back in his chair, voice curling with quiet intrigue, "I'll see for myself just how far Toshinori has managed to crawl back to life."

The contact hesitated before asking, "And what of Izuku Midoriya?"

All For One's tone shifted, curious, almost amused. "If Toshinori is moving, then the boy will never be far behind. Observe one, and you will find the other."

"…Understood."

The familiar buzz of U.A. High filled the air as students filed into their classrooms, the calm after the storm settling in. Izuku barely had time to sit at his desk before several of his classmates swarmed him, their expressions ranging from sly grins to outright smugness.

Kaminari leaned against his desk, waggling his eyebrows. "Sooo… heard you got pretty close with Melissa Shield, huh?"

Mina smirked, leaning over from the next row. "A kiss on the cheek, Midoriya? That's practically a confession!"

Izuku's face turned crimson as he waved his hands frantically. "N-no! It's not like that! She just—she was just being polite!"

Kirishima chuckled, giving him a thumbs-up. "Polite or not, dude, that's still manly as heck!"

Even Jirou, pretending to look bored, raised an eyebrow. "You're blushing way too much for it to be 'just polite,' Midoriya."

Izuku buried his face in his hands, groaning softly. "It's not what you think…"

Mina leaned closer, grinning. "Soo… when's the date then?"

"Yeah," Kaminari chimed in with a sly smirk. "You gonna take her out once she's back in town?"

Toru's invisible hands clapped together excitedly, her voice chiming in from seemingly nowhere. "Ooooh, Midoriya, you have to! She totally likes you back!"

Izuku's head shot up, face going scarlet. "W-we're not like that! And after what happened at I-Island, a date would be the last thing on her mind!"

The words left his mouth before he could stop them, and his eyes widened as he slapped both hands over his mouth. But it was too late.

Kirishima whistled low. "Dude… you just totally admitted it."

Mina grinned wider. "Ohhh, so you do want to!"

Toru giggled mischievously. "Called it!"

Izuku let out a muffled groan behind his hands, wishing he could sink into the floor.

Across the room, Ochako watched the scene unfold, her cheeks puffing slightly as she exhaled. Momo, seated beside her, gave her a knowing look, a teasing smile curling at her lips.

"Jealous, Ochako?" Momo asked lightly.

Ochako hesitated, then let out a small breath. "…Kinda, yeah. But I think I just see him as a friend after all. He deserves to be happy." She quickly shifted the subject, her tone softening. "What happened at I-Island was crazy, though. Good thing none of the civilians were seriously hurt."

Momo nodded, her expression thoughtful. "True. But it should also be motivation for us. We need to work harder, so that next time, nobody gets hurt at all. Not on our watch."

Ochako's face brightened with determination. "Yeah! You're right, Momo. We can't let anything like that happen again."

The cafeteria hummed with the usual lunchtime chatter as Izuku sat with Ochako, Momo, Iida, and Shoji, their trays lined with half-eaten meals. The conversation drifted casually, ranging from classwork to light jokes, a welcome return to normalcy after I-Island.

"Pass the salt, please," Iida requested politely, adjusting his glasses as Shoji slid it over with one of his extra arms.

They were mid-discussion when a voice interrupted, polite but curious. "Mind if I sit here?"

Izuku looked up, already opening his mouth to answer, "Yeah, of course—" when the words caught in his throat. His eyes widened, and the rest of the table followed his gaze.

Standing there, dressed neatly in a U.A. uniform and carrying a lunch tray, was Melissa Shield.

"Hi," she said with a warm smile.

The table went silent, every pair of eyes widening in surprise. Izuku's jaw worked soundlessly, while Ochako and Momo exchanged stunned glances. Melissa laughed softly at their reactions.

"Sorry! I know this is… kinda sudden," she said as she slid into the empty seat beside Izuku. "I hope you don't mind."

Momo, regaining her composure, offered a polite smile. "Not at all, Melissa. It's just… surprising. How are you here, if you don't mind me asking?"

Melissa's smile softened. "My dad arranged it. After everything that happened on I-Island, he thought I needed somewhere to take it easy while the rebuilding goes on. Somewhere I could… recover after all that."

Ochako grinned, leaning forward. "And that 'somewhere' had to be a Hero School?"

Melissa put on a mock-offended look. "Hey, I'm in the Support Course! Right where I want to be." She then turned to Izuku, her warm smile returning.

Izuku, cheeks turning pink, gave her an awkward grin in return, unable to keep from smiling back.

Later that week, Izuku stood inside Nighteye's Agency, the polished floors gleaming under bright overhead lights. Mirai circled him with a critical eye, hands clasped behind his back, gaze sharp and unflinching.

"So this is the new form you unlocked at I-Island," Mirai said evenly. His eyes studied every detail of Izuku's Storm Form—the segmented armor of swirling wind that wrapped tightly around his body. It wasn't a solid plate but a sleek, aerodynamic carapace of compressed currents, layered like insect chitin, translucent and shifting with every subtle movement. The golden markings at the chest and arms pulsed faintly, the wind rippling over them like living muscle. "Interesting. The armor flows with you, not against you. Tell me what you've confirmed so far."

Izuku shifted fully into Storm Form, the sound of rushing air filling the room as papers fluttered from nearby desks. The segmented armor shimmered brighter, its edges flaring as if reacting to his heightened focus. "Enhanced speed, aerokinesis… and this armor. It's not very strong defensively, but it cushions blows and keeps me stable even at full sprint. I've only tested basic mobility so far—I need a proper run to know what else it can do."

Mirai's sharp gaze followed the way the armor flexed naturally with each breath. "The design's impressive. If you can maintain this form at maximum output, it might be a significant leap in your overall performance. Follow me. We'll put it to the test."

Minutes later, Izuku stood at the starting line of a specialized obstacle course built to push both speed and precision. Mechanical walls slid unpredictably, narrow platforms shifted at random intervals, and foam projectiles fired from concealed ports.

From the observation booth, Mirai's voice carried, calm but commanding. "Clear every section as fast as you can. Evade every hit. If this form is as efficient as it looks, this will show us its limits."

Izuku exhaled sharply, crouching low. The armor along his legs tightened, plates locking slightly like a sprinter's braces. Then he burst forward.

The course blurred around him. Time itself seemed to stretch—his surroundings slowing as his perception sharpened, every projectile's arc and every platform's shift registering in perfect detail. The armor flared at key moments, air jets hissing as he redirected himself mid-run. His feet skimmed over rising platforms with effortless balance, the swirling plates around his calves channeling bursts of wind for tighter, quicker turns. He slipped between shifting walls in fluid arcs, his body almost weightless, his movements sharp and precise—like a storm given form.

Mirai scribbled notes rapidly, his gaze intense. "Excellent acceleration… reaction speed drastically improved. He's adapting mid-movement. Very efficient use of wind propulsion."

Izuku vaulted a high barrier, twisting mid-air as the plates along his shoulders shifted, releasing a controlled gust that carried him cleanly over the last set of obstacles. He landed in a sliding stop at the finish line, the currents around him dispersing in a final soft rush.

Panting, Izuku straightened, exhilaration shining in his eyes. "It's… strange," he said between breaths. "When I'm in this form, it feels like time slows down. Like I can see every move coming before it happens."

Mirai adjusted his glasses thoughtfully. "Heightened perception to match the speed—interesting. That could make this form far more effective than I anticipated."

Izuku nodded, still catching his breath, a determined smile on his face. "I'm ready for whatever's next."

In a dimly lit lair far from the public eye, All For One sat in his high-backed chair, fingers steepled as he observed the figures standing before him. Without Shigaraki or Kurogiri, he had to rely on what Giran could scrape together on short notice—and these were, for now, the best he could get.

A young man with disheveled black hair and burns creeping up his neck leaned lazily against the wall, blue flames flickering faintly from his fingertips. Beside him, a girl in a sailor uniform rocked back and forth on her heels, twirling a knife idly, a grin far too wide for comfort.

Further down the line, a sharply dressed man in a top hat twirled a metallic ball in one hand, his mask concealing any hint of expression, while a broad-shouldered individual with magnetic braces strapped to their chest adjusted their scarf impatiently. A boy in a gas mask shifted uncomfortably at the end, his gloved fingers tapping at the canisters strapped to his vest.

Two more stood apart from the group: one clad in a straitjacket, his teeth bared in a manic grin as he twitched toward any movement, and another whose body seemed almost too large for the space—patches of fur and muscle shifting with an animalistic restlessness. A tall man with a flowing coat stood near them, his eyes cold and calculating, while a wiry figure wrapped in bandages shifted from foot to foot, his stance loose but alert. A woman with short, blade-like hair crossed her arms, her sharp gaze cutting over the room.

All For One's voice was calm, measured, almost amused. "Not the most refined selection… but you'll do for now."

He leaned back slightly, his mask glinting faintly in the dim light. "You've all been chosen because you can deliver results. And you will—because failure is not an option. Each of you has a role to play. Some of you will spread chaos, force the heroes to scatter. Others will hunt, pressure, and draw out those I wish to see tested. And a select few," his gaze lingered on the taller figures, "will serve as my spearpoint when the time comes. Make no mistake—every move you make from this point serves my design. Do not disappoint me."

A figure in the back stepped forward, his long coat shifting with the movement. His expression was calm, almost smug. "It's good to be working under you again, All For One."

All For One tilted his head slightly, the faintest trace of satisfaction in his voice. "Ah, Nine. It certainly has been some time since I last saw you. Tell me—who have you brought along?"

The man nodded once, gesturing to the others. "Followers I've gathered myself. They're eager to serve… provided they can prove their worth."

All For One's masked face inclined ever so slightly, his tone smooth. "Then let us see just how useful they truly are."

The afternoon sun bathed the streets in warm light as Izuku walked alongside Ochako, Momo, Iida, Shoji, and Melissa, their bags slung over their shoulders. The group chatted idly, the comfortable air of friends walking home together a welcome change from recent chaos.

"So, Melissa," Ochako asked, smiling, "how are you finding U.A. so far?"

Melissa returned the smile, her steps light. "It's been great, honestly. The Support Course is everything I hoped for—and more. The tech here is incredible." She let out a small, amused laugh. "Though… Hatsume-san could stand to tone things down just a little."

Iida groaned, his head sinking into his hands at the memory. "Yes… I can vouch for that. Her 'enthusiasm' during our Sports Festival match was… unforgettable."

Melissa chuckled at his reaction. "I can imagine."

Momo nodded politely, adding, "Still, it must be rewarding, working with technology at this level."

Melissa's eyes brightened. "It really is. I feel like I can learn so much here. It's exactly where I want to be."

Izuku, walking beside her, gave her an encouraging smile, his cheeks tinting pink when she glanced his way and smiled back. But the smile faltered as a familiar, oppressive sensation crept over him—a presence he knew too well. A Lord. His stomach tightened. It just had to be now, he thought grimly.

He forced a casual tone, speaking up suddenly. "Hey, I think I'll head on ahead. I still need to review for next week's exam."

Ochako and the others exchanged quick glances, suspicion flickering in their eyes, but Melissa simply nodded with a warm smile. "Alright. Be careful on your way home, Izuku."

Izuku nodded quickly, forcing a wave as he turned and jogged off, calling over his shoulder, "I will!" The moment he rounded the corner and was out of sight, his jog shifted into a sprint. Wind curled around his legs as he shifted into Ground Form for balance before transitioning smoothly into Storm Form, the segmented armor of swirling currents snapping into place as his speed surged.

The city blurred past until he skidded to a stop in a deserted block, the oppressive sensation intensifying. His breathing steadied as he scanned the empty street, trying to pinpoint where the Lord would strike.

The answer came in an instant.

A rush of air—he darted aside just as something dove at him with terrifying speed. Talons sliced through the space he'd occupied a heartbeat ago, slamming into the concrete with bone-cracking force, leaving a crater where they struck.

Izuku spun to face his attacker, his eyes widening.

The creature stood tall, a humanoid raven silhouetted against the bruised evening sky, killing intent radiating off it in palpable waves. Its form was a nightmarish blend of shadow and metal—seamless, leather-like skin as black as midnight, traced with glowing scarlet patterns that pulsed faintly like veins. Its head was encased in a dark iron helm, a long, wicked silver beak jutting where its face should have been, and hollow voids marked its eyes, giving it an unblinking stare.

From its back unfurled immense, obsidian-feathered wings, each tipped like a blade honed for slaughter. Its gloved, studded hands flexed, eager to grasp and tear, while its powerful legs—encased in the same blackened material—ended in monstrous boots studded with countless rivets and adorned with bone-white skulls. The Lord stood, arms outstretched, like a dark god ready to claim its dominion.

Izuku slid into a ready stance, wind swirling tighter around him as he steadied his breathing. This one's different… fast, he thought, eyes narrowing. It could only be Graviel's.

The Lord moved first, lunging forward with shocking speed, wings slicing the air as it closed the distance. Izuku dashed to meet it head-on, the two clashing in a flurry of strikes, neither wasting a single motion. Blades of wind met raking talons, each impact sending bursts of air and shards of broken concrete flying.

Izuku gritted his teeth. It was matching him—strike for strike, step for step. It's keeping up with my speed… He shifted tactics, darting back and unleashing compressed gusts of wind, using his aerokinesis to keep it at bay and strike even while dodging. But the raven-like Lord spread its wings wide, the currents around it twisting unnaturally—it was manipulating the wind just as easily, countering each blast with its own.

Izuku's eyes widened. They planned for this. They knew I'd use Storm Form.

His hand shot to the right module of his belt, but before he could press it, the Lord lunged again, its talons slamming down to pin him in place, forcing him back on the defensive. It's not letting me change into Flame Form.

Izuku's jaw tightened, but instead of panicking, he dug his heels in. Fine. Then I'll end this with Storm Form.

Wind screamed around him as he pushed his speed higher, every muscle in his body adjusting instinctively, his perception sharpening even further. Time seemed to slow again, the Lord's every movement—every twitch of its wings, every shift of its talons—registering in perfect clarity. He darted around it in rapid, erratic bursts, faster with each step, forcing it to turn and pivot, straining to keep up.

Adapt… push harder… don't let it breathe.

The raven-like Lord swung, talons slicing through where Izuku had been a fraction of a second earlier. But Izuku was already behind it, riding a sudden burst of compressed wind. He shifted his weight, launching himself into a tight spiral, his arms sweeping outward.

A precise blade of wind carved through the air as Izuku shot past. For a moment, there was only silence—then the Lord staggered, a crimson line flashing across its torso before its body split cleanly in two, shredded by the razor-sharp gust.

Izuku slid to a stop several meters away, chest rising and falling, the last remnants of wind swirling off his armor. His eyes stayed locked on the falling remains, his breath steadying. "And that's that," he muttered under his breath.

He tilted his head back, exhaling slowly, but the relief didn't last. His senses flared, warning him of danger. Izuku's head darted around sharply, eyes narrowing.

From around the corner, a new figure emerged, stepping into the dim light—a sculpted nightmare of controlled power. Its body, wrapped in dark, organic armor, rippled with tightly coiled muscle, every line unnaturally precise. The shell was a deep, oppressive green, like the heart of a forest at midnight, drinking in the light around it. Jagged protrusions jutted from its shoulders, forearms, and calves, sharp and purposeful, like natural blades.

Its head was the most striking—helmet-like, integrated seamlessly with its body, angular lines tapering into pointed ears or horns. Two crimson eyes blazed from within, glowing with predatory malice, like a beast waiting to pounce. Its left hand clenched into a tight fist while its right hung loosely at its side, claws extended ever so slightly, poised to strike. The creature stood silently, an unyielding sentinel born of shadow and grim intent.

Izuku's breath hitched at the sight. "A… An Agito?" he muttered under his breath.

The two locked eyes for a long, tense moment before the creature drew its upper body back and let out a deafening roar, its mouth plate splitting open to reveal jagged, metallic ridges. The pressure of its killing intent slammed against Izuku like a physical weight, but he held his ground.

Then it lunged.

Izuku moved instantly, meeting it head-on, their clash erupting in a storm of strikes. The Agito fought with wild, feral aggression, its attacks lacking the calculated precision of the raven-like Lord. Izuku ducked and weaved, reading its reckless swings. It's fighting on instinct… no real strategy. I can use this.

But as he moved to counter, his hesitation slowed him—just for a heartbeat. If this is another Agito, maybe it's not in control. I need to try— "Can you hear me?!" he called out, dodging a swipe. "You don't have to fight—"

The Agito roared again, showing no sign of restraint, forcing Izuku back into the fight.

Blow after blow landed, but the creature's armor barely dented, its body absorbing punishment with terrifying resilience. Izuku's eyes widened. It's tough… tougher!

Deciding to gamble, Izuku tightened his stance, air screaming around his fist. He launched forward with a devastating punch, a gust exploding outward like a miniature Texas Smash. The impact connected square in its chest, the force punting the Agito through a wall with a thunderous crash.

Izuku held his stance, watching the crumbling debris, waiting for it to emerge. Seconds ticked by. Nothing.

He approached cautiously, scanning the wreckage—only to find the creature gone. No body, no trace, just shattered concrete. It didn't dissolve like a Lord… it fled. Durable enough to take that and run.

Izuku deactivated Storm Form, the wind armor dissipating with a soft rush. He turned to leave—and froze.

Melissa stood at the edge of the street, eyes wide in shock, staring at him. Izuku's heart dropped as he remembered exactly where he was—this street led straight to Toshinori's home, where Melissa was staying.