The air in the UA conference room was thick with a tense silence, broken only by the low hum of the projector. On the large screen, Recovery Girl's weary face filled the frame, her usual spry demeanor replaced by a somber gravity. Behind her, on a pristine white infirmary bed, lay Yuga Aoyama, unnaturally still, a faint, almost imperceptible glow emanating from where Recovery Girl's lips pressed gently against his forehead.

"His condition is stable," Recovery Girl's voice, usually so brisk and reassuring, was hushed, "at least for now."

Principal Nezu, perched on his chair at the head of the polished table, his paws steepled, spoke with quiet intensity. "And your Quirk, Chiyo-san? Has it accomplished anything beyond mere stabilization?"

A heavy sigh rippled through the monitor. Recovery Girl slowly pulled back from Aoyama, her shoulders slumping. She shook her head, a gesture of profound frustration. "No, Principal. Not truly. It's… baffling."

She turned her gaze to the camera, her eyes clouded with concern. "Even months ago, I began to notice it. My Quirk, designed to accelerate and enhance the body's natural healing process, barely had an effect on him. Even simple scrapes or cuts would heal at a snail's pace, much slower than any of his peers. It was as if his body was… resisting the very essence of my Quirk."

Her gaze seemed to drift, unfocused, as if recalling a troubling pattern. "Barring young Midoriya, Aoyama was the only student who exhibited this odd, almost inert reaction to my healing touch."

A heavy silence descended upon the conference room, the staff exchanging tense looks. Some were contemplative, their brows furrowed in thought. Nezu, in particular, seemed lost in consideration, his sharp eyes narrowing slightly.

"Chiyo-san," Nezu finally broke the quiet, his voice a low murmur, "is it possible that his Quirk is merely acting up? Unstable Quirks are not exactly uncommon, after all."

Recovery Girl sighed again, a sound of deep weariness. "It's possible, Principal. I concede that much. But it certainly doesn't explain the… Agito-like mutation. Young Midoriya swore by it in his statement."

Nezu's expression deepened, clearly finding this information troubling. Just then, as if on cue, the conference room door opened quietly. Kagutsuchi stepped inside, no longer in his janitor uniform. He was impeccably dressed in a sharp black suit and a silver tie, his signature dark coat absent. He moved with an almost ethereal grace, wordlessly taking the empty seat beside Nemuri Kayama, who offered him a subtle, acknowledging nod.

Nezu wasted no time on pleasantries. His gaze, sharp and direct, fixed on Kagutsuchi. "Kagutsuchi-san. It seems you know something of Aoyama's... condition."

Kagutsuchi met his gaze without flinching, a faint, almost imperceptible smirk playing on his lips. "I am afraid I do, Principal. We have known for quite some time. From the moment he was born Quirkless, in fact."

The revelation hit the faculty like a physical blow. A collective gasp ripped through the room. According to Aoyama's personal files and the official Quirk Registry, he was unequivocally marked as having a Quirk. The shock was palpable, disbelief etched onto every face.

"That's preposterous!" Nezu interjected, his voice uncharacteristically sharp, his paws thumping lightly on the table. "The Quirk Registry is a highly regulated, secure system. To suggest such a widespread fabrication on a student's record is… an extraordinary claim."

Kagutsuchi leaned back in his chair, his voice calm, almost dismissive of their astonishment. "Doctored, fabricated. How else would he have gone through the system if his records weren't tampered with? His parents, desperate for him to fit into a Quirk-centric society, simply paid the right people. It's not as difficult as you might imagine when the 'right people' are… motivated. A few keystrokes, a forged medical certificate, and suddenly, a Quirkless child becomes a boy with a 'Navel Laser' in the official records. It's a testament to human ingenuity, wouldn't you say? Or perhaps, human desperation."

This further unsettling reveal sent fresh whispers rippling through the staff. Murmurs of disbelief and concern filled the room, some teachers shaking their heads, others exchanging bewildered glances.

Nezu, however, merely raised a paw, silencing the growing chatter with an almost imperceptible gesture. His gaze remained fixed on Kagutsuchi, a profound understanding dawning in his sharp eyes. He knew. He knew Kagutsuchi held more pieces to this disturbing puzzle.

"Kagutsuchi-san," Nezu's voice was low, almost a plea, "you know more. Much more. I implore you, confess everything you know about young Aoyama's true condition. The safety of our students, the very integrity of this institution, depends on it."

Kagutsuchi swept his gaze over the assembled staff, a slow, deliberate movement. Some teachers met his eyes with anticipatory looks, especially Nemuri, who leaned forward slightly, her expression a mix of curiosity and grim expectation. With a soft sigh that escaped through his nostrils, Kagutsuchi finally spoke, his voice devoid of his usual mocking lilt.

"You are not going to like it."

Shota Aizawa, ever the pragmatist, dared to reply, his voice flat and challenging. "Try us."

Kagutsuchi paused again, a beat of heavy silence stretching in the room. Then, he simply uttered two words, each one landing like a hammer blow.

"All For One."

The name hung in the air, a chilling pronouncement that immediately shattered the fragile composure of the assembled heroes. A collective gasp, sharper and more horrified than before, ripped through the room.

"All For One?!" Present Mic's usually boisterous voice was reduced to a strangled whisper, his eyes wide with disbelief.

Snipe instinctively reached for the revolver holstered at his hip, his hand hovering over the grip, while Ectoplasm's multiple arms twitched, ready for action. Midnight's playful demeanor vanished, replaced by a grim set to her jaw. Even Cementoss seemed to stiffen, his stony form radiating a sudden, intense tension. The very mention of the arch-villain, the symbol of pure evil, in connection with a UA student, was an unthinkable horror.

"What are you implying, Kagutsuchi-san?" Nezu's voice, though still calm, held an undeniable edge of steel. His paws, previously steepled, now gripped the edge of the table, his sharp eyes boring into Kagutsuchi, demanding an explanation for such an outrageous, terrifying claim.

Kagutsuchi's smirk returned, a chilling, knowing curve of his lips. "Precisely what was stated, Principal. The Aoyamas, desperate to afford their son a semblance of a 'normal' existence, one that would undoubtedly ostracize his Quirklessness, explored every conceivable avenue. They paid whomever, consulted whomever, simply for an opportunity. And it arrived, though not in the manner they might have preferred."

His gaze drifted towards the monitor, where Aoyama lay unconscious. "Young Aoyama was but a mere child at the time, no older than a toddler, when a man — whom he was instructed to refer to as his 'uncle' — came to their residence. This individual granted him what the public erroneously believed to be a natural Quirk. It is anything but. His body, from the very moment it was administered, has been actively rejecting it. Aoyama was always destined to awaken as an Agito, had his parents merely afforded him the necessary time. But, alas, such are the regrettable consequences of desperation and impatience."

A wave of profound shock, even deeper than the initial revelation of Aoyama's Quirklessness, washed over the faculty. The implications of Kagutsuchi's words were staggering, painting a horrifying picture of manipulation and betrayal.

"Are you saying," Eraser Head's voice was low, laced with a dangerous tremor, "that All For One gave Aoyama his Quirk? That he's... a plant?"

"A plant? No, not quite," Kagutsuchi corrected, a hint of disdain in his tone. "A victim, perhaps. A pawn, certainly. All For One does not 'give' Quirks in the benevolent sense. He bestows them, true, but always with a purpose, a hidden agenda. In Aoyama's case, it was a cruel twist of fate, a desperate family seeking normalcy, unknowingly falling into the clutches of the very entity that seeks to destabilize this world."

Present Mic slammed a fist onto the table, his face contorted in a rare display of raw fury. "That monster! To prey on a child, on a family's desperation... it's unforgivable!"

"Indeed," Kagutsuchi agreed, his voice surprisingly devoid of his usual cynicism. "The irony, of course, is that Aoyama's true nature, his inherent capacity to become an Agito, made him incompatible with such a crude imposition. His body's rejection of the 'Navel Laser' was not a malfunction, but a fundamental, divine resistance. It was the Will of Light asserting itself against an unnatural intrusion. Had his parents simply waited, had they not succumbed to their fear of a Quirkless future, he would have awakened naturally, without this agonizing internal conflict."

Recovery Girl, her face pale, looked from the unconscious Aoyama on the screen to Kagutsuchi. "So, his current condition... the Agito mutation... it's a result of this rejection? His body fighting back?"

"Precisely," Kagutsuchi confirmed with a curt nod. "His Agito essence is attempting to purge the foreign element, to reclaim its natural state. It is a violent, painful process, as you have witnessed. The 'Agito-like mutation,' as young Midoriya described it, was merely his body's desperate, instinctual attempt to shed the imposed Quirk and manifest its true power."

Kan, who had been listening with grim intensity, finally spoke, his deep voice cutting through the lingering tension. "So, All For One set Aoyama up to be a mole, then? To infiltrate UA?"

Kagutsuchi inclined his head slightly, a subtle acknowledgment. "Not to such an overt degree, no. Aoyama's role was more subtle, a long game. He was meant to provide occasional updates, perhaps a few names, just enough to maintain his cover without drawing too much attention. Think of him less as an immediate weapon and more as a sleeper agent, an investment for a future purpose. A purpose that, thankfully, seems to have been thoroughly disrupted by his unexpected awakening as an Agito."

Suddenly, a loud THUD echoed through the room. All eyes snapped to Toshinori, who had slammed both hands onto the table, clenched into fists. His head was bowed, his broad shoulders shaking slightly, seething with barely contained rage. He took a deep, shuddering breath, visibly forcing himself to calm. When he finally looked up, his eyes, though still burning with fury, were fixed on Kagutsuchi.

"What can be done, Kagutsuchi?" Toshinori's voice was a low growl, raw with desperate urgency.

Kagutsuchi's expression remained unreadable, his gaze unwavering. "If the 'Navel Laser' is not removed," he stated, his voice flat and devoid of emotion, "Aoyama will continue to experience unpredictable and very painful mutations. And you should be well aware of the end result if left for too long."

A heavy, collective silence fell upon the faculty once more. No one needed to voice the unspoken truth. The "end result" was clear: either Aoyama's body would simply give out under the immense strain of the constant rejection, or his increasing instability would inevitably draw the attention and intervention of a Lord. The outcome, in either scenario, would be tragic and final.

Kagutsuchi's gaze swept over their grim faces, confirming their unspoken fears. "Indeed," he continued, his voice now carrying a chilling weight, "at our annual meeting in Heaven, Aoyama's name was already on the list of Agito slated for termination."

The revelation struck them like a physical blow. "Termination?!" Present Mic's voice cracked, the word a horrified gasp. Snipe's hand tightened on his holster, while Midnight's eyes widened in utter shock. The idea that a student, a child, was already marked for death by these enigmatic, powerful beings, was almost too much to bear.

With another sudden, explosive BANG, Toshinori shot out of his seat, slamming both hands onto the table, his fists clenched tight. His face was a mask of barely contained fury, his head still down, shoulders heaving. He took a ragged, calming breath, then slowly lifted his gaze, his blue eyes blazing with fierce, desperate resolve as they locked onto Kagutsuchi.

"Can you remove it, Kagutsuchi?" Toshinori demanded, his voice a strained whisper, thick with a plea. "The 'Navel Laser'? Can you take it from him?"

Kagutsuchi's expression remained unreadable for a long moment, a flicker of something unidentifiable in his eyes. Then, with a slow, almost imperceptible nod, he confirmed, "I can."

A collective sigh of relief, faint but palpable, rippled through the room, quickly followed by renewed tension.

"However," Kagutsuchi continued, his voice flat, "this would be considered my second miracle. Such acts are not given lightly, nor without consequence. It will undoubtedly lead to a severe reprimand from up top."

"Then you must!" Toshinori roared, his voice cracking with emotion, leaning across the table towards Kagutsuchi. "For the sake of Aoyama! He has had no agency in any of this! He was a child, manipulated, a victim! You healed me, Kagutsuchi, you gave me back my strength! Give him back his life, his future!"

Kagutsuchi regarded Toshinori for a moment longer, his unreadable gaze seeming to weigh the hero's impassioned plea. Then, as if a decision had been made, he slowly rose from his seat.

"Very well," Kagutsuchi stated, his voice calm, yet carrying undeniable authority. "Some of you will need to accompany me. This is not a task for the faint of heart, nor for those who cannot maintain absolute discretion."

Without a moment's hesitation, Toshinori stepped forward, his jaw set. "I will go."

Recovery Girl, despite her age and weariness, pushed herself up from her chair, her resolve clear. "I must observe. For young Aoyama's sake, and for medical understanding."

Nemuri Kayama, her usual playful smirk replaced by a serious frown, also stood. "Count me in. This involves a student, and a grave injustice."

Aizawa, ever vigilant, simply nodded, his eyes narrowed. "I'm coming. Someone needs to keep an eye on him," he added, subtly gesturing towards Kagutsuchi.

Nezu, meanwhile, had already begun to move, his paws already tapping away at a secure tablet. "Excellent. I will remain here to begin the process of securing Aoyama's parents. We cannot, under any circumstances, allow All For One to be in the know that we've just cut off one of his assets. This must be handled with the utmost secrecy and precision."

Moments later, a small, grim procession arrived at the detention infirmary, a more secure, less frequented wing of the UA medical facilities. The air here was colder, the silence more profound. Aoyama lay on a bed, still unconscious, but now hooked up to more monitoring equipment.

Kagutsuchi approached the bed, his demeanor shifting from the detached observer to something akin to a surgeon. He took a moment to examine Aoyama, his eyes scanning the boy's form with an intense, almost clinical focus, discerning the severity of his mutation.

"He's not fully awakened," Kagutsuchi murmured, more to himself than to the others, his voice low. "Not yet, and certainly not properly." He gestured vaguely at Aoyama's chest and abdomen, where subtle, almost scaly textures seemed to be forming beneath the skin, and a slight, almost imperceptible distention was visible around his midsection. "What Aoyama is experiencing is a condition that has happened before, when an Agito does not undergo a proper awakening. The Lords dubbed it 'Gills,' due to a commonality of sharing amphibious, sometimes reptilian, traits in its initial, uncontrolled manifestation."

Nemuri, her brow raised in genuine intrigue, chimed in, "Wait. I always thought Agito forms were more beetle-like. You know, with the hard outer shell and those prominent horn-like structures?"

Kagutsuchi let out a short, dismissive snort. "Yeah, a common misconception. Agito is actually more of a dragon than a beetle."

This declaration understandably baffled those with him. Toshinori, Recovery Girl, and Aizawa exchanged bewildered glances, their expressions a mixture of confusion and disbelief. The popular image of armored heroes, deeply ingrained in their society, was unequivocally tied to insects.

Kagutsuchi took a deep, measured intake of breath, his hands slowly rising, hovering over Aoyama's prone form. "Laying of the hands," he quipped, a faint, dry amusement in his tone. "Classic."

Aizawa just rolled his eyes, a familiar exasperation crossing his face. "Just get on with it."

As Kagutsuchi spoke, a faint, ethereal light began to emanate from his outstretched hands, a soft, golden glow that slowly expanded, enveloping Aoyama's entire body. The light pulsed gently, almost breathing, and within it, the subtle, scaly textures on Aoyama's skin seemed to shimmer and recede. A collective intake of breath from the onlookers filled the room as, from Aoyama's prone form, a small, vibrant ball of light slowly began to emerge. It hovered, pulsating with an inner brilliance, directly above Aoyama's chest, casting a luminous glow that seemed to brighten the entire infirmary.

With a swift, precise motion, Kagutsuchi reached out and cupped the shimmering orb in his hands. It settled there, radiating a pure, intense light. He then presented it to the stunned heroes, his expression still unreadable.

"Here it is," Kagutsuchi announced, his voice carrying a strange resonance in the now brightly lit room. "Navel Laser. A Quirk."

The others were utterly fascinated by the sight. They stared, mesmerized, at the orb of pure energy, a tangible representation of something they had only ever known as an intrinsic part of a person. It pulsed, it glowed, it seemed to hum with silent power, illuminating the stark white walls of the infirmary with an otherworldly brilliance. Never before had they witnessed a Quirk in such a detached, isolated form.

Nemuri, her eyes wide with a mixture of awe and morbid curiosity, couldn't help but ask, "What will you do with it, Kagutsuchi? Are you just going to put it in a glass jar?"

Kagutsuchi's gaze remained fixed on the glowing orb, a flicker of something unreadable in his eyes. "The original owner passed long ago," he stated, his voice flat, almost distant. "Killed by All For One, for displeasing him, as is his custom."

He then slowly cupped the Quirk one last time between both hands, as if savoring its essence. With a deliberate motion, he opened his palms. The ball of light, still pulsing with its inner brilliance, rose once more, ascending gently into the air. As it climbed, it began to shimmer, its edges blurring, and then, like countless glittering particles, it dissipated, dissolving into nothingness before vanishing entirely. An almost somber note settled over the proceeding, as the room returned to its previous, dimmer illumination, leaving behind only the lingering sense of a profound, irreversible act.

Recovery Girl, her head bowed, seemed to mourn the original owner, regardless of their past allegiances. Toshinori, too, stood with his head down, his fists clenched. All For One had played with far too many lives, twisted too many fates. His reckoning, Toshinori swore silently, should be at hand.

Kagutsuchi's voice cut through the heavy air, calm and steady. "Slow it down, Toshinori. You just passed One For All to young Mirio. You may still be running on embers, but that doesn't mean the bad guy is gonna be easy pickings."

Toshinori slowly raised his head, his expression now one of profound reverence and quiet understanding. "I know," he murmured, his voice soft but firm.

The following morning, the detention infirmary was quiet save for the faint, rhythmic beeping of medical equipment. Sunlight, pale and hesitant, filtered through a high, barred window, casting a weak glow on the sterile white walls. Izuku Midoriya stepped inside, his footsteps unnaturally soft on the linoleum floor. He hadn't slept much, the revelations of the previous day—Aoyama's true Quirklessness, All For One's insidious manipulation, the Agito's violent rejection—spinning relentlessly in his mind.

His gaze immediately found Yuga Aoyama. The boy was awake, sitting upright on his cot, a thin blanket draped over his lap. His head was bowed, his usually bright, expressive eyes unfocused, staring at some distant, unseen point on the floor. There was no trace of his usual flamboyant sparkle, no hint of the dramatic flair he so often displayed. He looked small, vulnerable, and utterly, profoundly lost.

Izuku stood by the doorway for a long moment, unsure how to approach. The silence stretched between them, heavy with unspoken questions. What was there to say? "Hey, so, you were actually a plant by All For One, Aoyama-kun?" Or, "You were born Quirkless?" Perhaps, "What's next?" Each thought felt equally inadequate, equally cruel in its bluntness. Izuku's own expression remained unreadable, a carefully constructed mask over his churning thoughts. He was a hero, but what did a hero say to a classmate who had just had his entire identity, his entire life's foundation, ripped away?

Finally, Aoyama slowly lifted his head. His eyes, still clouded with a deep, weary sadness, met Izuku's. For another beat, they simply stared at each other, two boys caught in a web of impossible truths, neither knowing where to begin.

Then, Izuku took a deep breath, the sterile air filling his lungs, and the simplest, most human question escaped his lips.

"Have you eaten yet, Aoyama-kun?"

Aoyama blinked, a slow, almost imperceptible movement, and then wordlessly shook his head.

Izuku looked down, then fully entered the room, approaching Aoyama's bedside. He unzipped his bag, digging through its contents before producing a breakfast sandwich, still wrapped in clear plastic, from a local bakery. He quietly offered it to Aoyama. "I can get you a drink from the vending machine, if you want."

Aoyama stared at the sandwich, a simple, comforting offering. But as he looked at the food, a sudden wave of nausea seemed to hit him. He bent over, covering his mouth with a trembling hand, his body wracked by a silent, dry heave. Izuku didn't say anything, his lips pressing into a tight, thin line. He simply placed the sandwich gently on the nightstand beside the bed. As he turned away, a quiet, hoarse voice stopped him.

"I'm sorry." The words were devoid of Aoyama's usual theatricality or French flourishes, just a raw, simple apology.

Izuku, his back still to Aoyama, remained silent for another moment before turning and leaving the infirmary, the soft click of the door echoing the quiet finality of the encounter.

Outside the imposing gates of U.A. High, the usual morning bustle of students was momentarily disrupted. Three figures entered the school grounds, drawing curious, then wary, glances. The one in the lead looked no older than a U.A. student, his frame thin and lanky. He had dark hair tied back in a loose ponytail, with a few bangs framing his face. He was wearing a sharp black suit with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows, a crisp white tie, and black trousers. Strangely enough, he was barefoot. He was flanked by two taller men dressed in civilian clothes. One wore a black sweater and cream trousers, the other a black and white flannel shirt and blue jeans. Both looked to be Japanese in their early twenties, but both carried stern, almost intimidating expressions on their faces, causing nearby students to instinctively give the trio a wide berth.

Moments later, in the U.A. faculty room, a subtle unease began to settle over the teachers. Shota Aizawa, mid-sip of his coffee, paused, his eyes narrowing almost imperceptibly as a prickle of something unfamiliar touched his senses. Across the room, Nemuri Kayama's pen, poised over a stack of written exams, stopped moving entirely. The hairs on her scalp bristled, an instinctual alarm bell ringing quietly in her mind.

Down near the main lobby, Kagutsuchi, who had been idly whistling a tuneless melody as he mopped the polished floor, turned his head. His golden eyes, usually filled with playful amusement, sharpened as the trio entered the building, their stern presence cutting through the usual school hum. They walked past him without a word, their gazes fixed straight ahead, ignoring the janitor. Kagutsuchi's whistle died on his lips, his gaze following their retreating forms until they disappeared down a corridor. With a faint sigh, he picked up his bucket and mop, then headed down the opposite corridor, clearly not wanting to be privy to what was undoubtedly about to happen.

Some time later, Principal Nezu sat behind his large, polished desk in his office, a calm, almost serene smile on his face. He faced the trio who had entered U.A. without much trouble, his paws steepled in a welcoming gesture. The lanky young man who seemed to be the leader of the group settled onto one of the plush sofas opposite Nezu, his bare feet resting casually on the carpet. His two taller companions took the sofa directly across from him, their stern expressions unwavering even in the comfortable setting.

"Welcome to U.A. High," Nezu chirped, his voice surprisingly warm despite the trio's somber demeanor. "I trust you found your way without difficulty?"

The young man turned his head, his sharp gaze landing on Nezu. Golden eyes, piercing behind thick-rimmed glasses, fixed on the principal. "Hand over Yuga Aoyama," he stated, his voice blunt, devoid of any pleasantries.

Nezu's calm smile remained, though a flicker of something unreadable passed through his eyes. After a brief pause, he replied, his voice equally plain. "No. I will not be surrendering a student to anyone, much less to you, Graviel."

Graviel remained silent for a moment, his expression unmoving. Then, he spoke again, his tone still direct. "And your reason for harboring him, Principal? He has been proven compromised by his involvement with All For One."

Nezu's gaze held steady. "Despite everything," he countered, "Aoyama-kun had not done anything damaging to U.A. We were able to reach him before things could escalate. And, even if he had, we would still not surrender the life of someone to be executed without due reason."

Graviel's eyes narrowed slightly. "The fact that he is an unstable Agito is reason enough. It always has been, as a justification for Lords to act. If you think you can deny it, Principal, you certainly have no idea what the risk entails."

Nezu's smile remained, though it seemed to tighten at the edges. "What risk could that be, Graviel?" he deflected, his voice soft. "A young man, deprived of agency from the start, being condemned for something beyond his control? I know very well that I cannot appeal to your sense of compassion, so I would be willing to settle for a compromise."

Graviel leaned back, his expression unreadable. "I can be quite patient when called upon, Principal. But my patience is not infinite. If you truly value the integrity of your school, you will cooperate. Resisting would simply be foolish."

"Would you be willing to go so far?" Nezu asked, his voice losing some of its warmth, a subtle challenge in his tone. "To hurt the very mortals that you should be protecting?"

Graviel's gaze remained flat. "Mortals usually don't have much of a choice on the matter when someone with actual authority dictates them."

"And what," Nezu asked, his head tilting slightly, "do you think of humanity, Graviel?"

Graviel's expression remained flat. "My opinion of humanity is irrelevant, Principal. It is not my place to judge them."

"I find them a fascinating species," Nezu mused, his smile returning to its usual serene warmth. "Once I was wise enough to understand them."

"That's rather rich, Principal," Graviel retorted, his voice dry. "Coming from someone who was experimented on by humans when you first manifested your Quirk."

Nezu ran a paw over his scar, a faint, almost wistful gesture. "Indeed. But I've learned that not all humans are alike. Some are capable of incredible good, while others fall short. But that," he concluded, his gaze firm, "doesn't mean they're any less deserving of dignity and respect."

Graviel's eyes held Nezu's, a flicker of something unreadable passing through them. "I have a great deal of respect for humanity, Principal. And it's that respect that compels me to do what I came to U.A. for: to secure Yuga Aoyama before his mutation endangers humanity."

Nezu went quiet for a moment, his gaze fixed on Graviel. "I am still offering a compromise, Graviel," he stated, his voice soft but persistent.

A beat of silence stretched between them, the air in the office growing heavy, almost oppressive. Nezu's smile, though still present, was a strained thing, a thin line he struggled to maintain with each passing second. Graviel's golden eyes never left his, and Nezu found himself unable to look away, caught in that piercing, unblinking stare.

"What," Graviel finally asked, his voice low, "would this compromise be?"

Nezu, without missing a beat, though the effort was clear in the slight tightening of his paw on the desk, offered, "We stabilize Aoyama-kun's transformation as an Agito. If young Midoriya was able to accomplish this far, surely Aoyama-kun can as well."

Graviel's reply was flat, devoid of any inflection. "An emotionally and mentally distressed young man whose entire life has just been upended is expected to become stable?"

"He is a student of U.A.," Nezu countered, his voice unwavering, though the strain in his smile was more evident now. "And here, we do not abandon our students. We provide the support, the guidance, and the environment for them to overcome their challenges. Young Midoriya's journey is a testament to the potential within those who awaken as Agito. With the right care, Aoyama-kun can also learn to control this power, to integrate it, and to become a force for good, rather than a danger." He paused, his gaze sharp. "Are you truly suggesting that a being of your power cannot comprehend the capacity for growth and adaptation in mortals, even under duress?"

Graviel's expression remained impassive, his eyes unblinking. "Growth and adaptation are inherent to all life, Principal. But there are limits. And there are circumstances under which even the most resilient of mortals will break. Aoyama's current state, his emotional turmoil, makes him a volatile variable. He is a danger not only to himself, but potentially to those around him, and to the delicate balance we maintain. To allow an unstable Agito to remain unchecked in a place like this, surrounded by other nascent powers, is a risk I am not willing to take. The consequences of a full, uncontrolled Agito awakening are... catastrophic. You have seen glimpses of it with Midoriya. Imagine that, without control, without guidance, fueled by despair." He leaned forward slightly, his voice dropping, though it lost none of its chilling flatness. "We are not without compassion, Principal. But our duty is to the greater whole. And the greater whole demands stability."

Nezu's smile finally vanished, replaced by a grim, determined set to his features. His paws flattened on the desk, his voice dropping to a low, firm tone that brooked no argument. "Then give us the chance to prove it, Graviel. Give him a chance. He deserves at least that much. We will take full responsibility for his stabilization. U.A. will ensure he does not become the 'catastrophe' you fear. We will not waver on this."

Graviel held Nezu's gaze for another long moment, his golden eyes unblinking, before he finally pulled his head back with a sigh. He massaged his eyes behind his thick-rimmed glasses, a rare gesture of weariness. "I need some coffee," he muttered, almost to himself.

The man in the black sweater immediately stood up. "What kind, Graviel?"

Graviel waved a dismissive hand. "You know what kind. Black, no sugar. Always."

Nezu, ever the gracious host despite the tension, spoke up helpfully. "There's coffee in the faculty room, young man. I'm sure it can be arranged for you." He gestured subtly towards the door. The man in the black sweater nodded, opening it, revealing the assembled U.A. faculty, their expressions guarded, their stances ready.

Shota Aizawa, his capture scarf draped loosely around his neck, stepped forward from the assembled U.A. faculty, his expression as tired as ever, but his eyes sharp and alert. "I'll take him," he stated, his voice a low rumble, nodding towards Graviel's companion. The man in the black sweater gave a curt nod in return, and the two walked off down the corridor, leaving the faculty room door ajar.

Among his colleagues, Toshinori Yagi stood, a muscular monolith, his hands clenched at his sides. He was torn. Every instinct screamed at him to burst into Nezu's office, to join the fray, to protect young Aoyama. But he knew, with a chilling certainty, that his presence might only complicate this already delicate negotiation. His heroic instincts warred with the strategic mind Nezu so often relied upon. His gaze was fixed on the partially open door, his jaw tight, a silent battle raging within him.

Moments later, the man in the black sweater returned, carrying a steaming mug. He placed it carefully on the desk in front of Graviel. Graviel picked up the mug, brought it to his lips, and, despite the obvious heat, swallowed the black liquid in one swift gulp. He set the empty mug down with a soft clink, then exhaled slowly, his posture relaxing almost imperceptibly.

"I've calmed down," Graviel stated, his voice still flat, but with a subtle shift in its underlying tension. "And I can think about this compromise." He paused, his golden eyes once again fixing on Nezu. "I will agree, Principal, provided you fulfill one condition."

Nezu's ears twitched, his gaze unwavering. "And what might this condition be, Graviel?"

Graviel turned fully to Nezu, his piercing eyes locking with the principal's. "For all of Class 1-A to fight me."

Nezu's calm facade shattered. His eyes, usually gleaming with shrewd intelligence, widened in disbelief, and his small paws clenched tightly on the desk. "Fight you?" he repeated, his voice barely above a whisper, the question laced with profound, almost comical, incredulity. "Graviel, are you suggesting a full-scale combat exercise between a single entity of your power and an entire class of developing heroes, many of whom are still mastering their Quirks? That's not a test, that's... that's an extermination!" His fur bristled, and the air around him seemed to crackle with a sudden, sharp indignation. "Are you quite mad?!"

Graviel's expression remained perfectly unperturbed by Nezu's outburst. "I will hold back, Principal," he stated, his voice as level as ever. "And as per the rules governing the Lords, we are not allowed to kill mortals. This is not an extermination. It is an assessment. If U.A. is so determined to protect Aoyama, then I would like to know how his classmates, his peers, would feel about the entire arrangement—with everything bared." Graviel scratched his cheek with a finger, his gaze unwavering. "The Lords, the Agito, all of it. They will have the proper context in order to make their own judgments."

Nezu stared, genuinely taken aback. This was a deliberate, brutal gambit. Graviel wasn't just pushing the envelope; he was tearing it open, aiming to expose the raw, messy truth of Aoyama's situation—and the larger, terrifying reality of the Lords and Agito—to the very people who had been his friends. He was trying to get Nezu to crack, to break his composure and reveal a weakness. The principal's mind raced, calculating the implications, the potential fallout, the sheer emotional devastation this could wreak on Class 1-A.

After what felt like an eternity, Nezu released the breath he hadn't realized he was holding. A humorless chuckle escaped him, a dry, rasping sound. "Well played, Graviel," he conceded, his voice laced with grudging admiration for the sheer audacity of the demand. His eyes, though still grim, held a newfound resolve. "You will have your fight. But it will take some time to prepare. We will need to ensure the proper facilities are secured, and the students... informed."

Graviel nodded, his expression unchanging. "My patience, as I mentioned, is not infinite. But it is considerable when called upon. You have one week, Principal. A full week to prepare your students and your facilities. I look forward to our... assessment."

Nezu and Graviel went over the final terms of their agreement, the air in the office still thick with unspoken tension, despite the apparent resolution. Graviel's conditions were clear: a week for U.A. to prepare, the full truth revealed to Class 1-A, and then a direct confrontation between him and the entire class. Once the details were settled, Graviel and his companions excused themselves.

As they exited Nezu's office, the assembled faculty parted, allowing Graviel a wide berth. The tension among the pro heroes was palpable, their guarded expressions a testament to the unsettling conversation they knew had just transpired. Toshinori, still a muscular monolith among his colleagues, watched Graviel. He wished he could have done something, said something, to shield young Aoyama from this cruel fate. He was tempted to step forward, to say his own piece, but a single, piercing glance from Graviel, cold and knowing, stopped him dead in his tracks.

The following day, a somber atmosphere hung heavy over U.A. High, a stark contrast to its usual vibrant energy. Principal Nezu had gathered Class 1-A not in their usual classroom, but in a private, soundproofed sitting area, the kind typically reserved for sensitive discussions. The entire faculty was present, their faces a mixture of grim determination and weary concern. Even Kagutsuchi was there, leaning against a wall, his usual playful smirk replaced by a neutral, almost detached expression, his golden eyes observing everything.

Nezu began, his voice calm yet grave, explaining the extraordinary circumstances that had brought them all together. He started with Aoyama, revealing the painful truth of his Quirklessness, the desperate pact his parents made with All For One, and Aoyama's unwilling role as a spy. The students' faces shifted through a spectrum of emotions: confusion, shock, betrayal, and eventually, a dawning understanding of the immense burden Aoyama had carried.

Then, Nezu moved on to Izuku. He spoke of the Agito, not as a Quirk, but as an awakening, a profound transformation. He explained the existence of the Lords, ancient beings who governed this power, and their "Divine Decree" that sought to maintain a delicate balance in the world. Kagutsuchi interjected occasionally, his voice smooth and unsettling, offering brief, clinical confirmations or additional, chilling details that painted a starker picture of the Lords' detached authority. He confirmed the nature of the Agito, the dangers of instability, and the cosmic stakes involved.

Finally, Nezu delivered Graviel's ultimatum: the "assessment." He explained that Graviel, a Lord himself, demanded a direct confrontation with all of Class 1-A, a test of their resolve and understanding, with everything laid bare. The implications of this fight, the sheer power of a Lord, even one holding back, hung heavy in the air.

By the time Nezu finished, the room was steeped in profound silence. Class 1-A, usually so boisterous and opinionated, was utterly floored. Their faces were pale, their eyes wide and unblinking. The weight of the revelations—the betrayal, the cosmic powers, the impossible fight ahead—had robbed them of all words. They simply sat there, stunned, processing a reality far more complex and terrifying than they had ever imagined. No one spoke.

The silence in the private sitting area stretched, thick and heavy, punctuated only by the faint hum of the ventilation system. Class 1-A, a group usually overflowing with energy and strong opinions, remained frozen.

Mina Ashido's vibrant pink skin seemed to have paled several shades, her usual cheerful demeanor replaced by a gaping mouth and wide, unseeing eyes. Eijiro Kirishima, whose hardened skin usually reflected his unwavering resolve, looked as though his very spirit had been fractured, his jaw slack. Denki Kaminari, for once, wasn't short-circuiting; he was simply staring blankly ahead, a single bead of sweat tracing a path down his temple. Katsuki Bakugo, surprisingly, was quiet, his usual explosive rage replaced by a terrifying stillness, his crimson eyes narrowed, trying to dissect the impossible information.

Izuku Midoriya, meanwhile, sat quietly, a familiar, cold dread settling deep in his stomach. He had known fragments of this truth, experienced the Agito's power firsthand, but hearing it all laid bare—the full scope of the Lords' influence, and then Graviel's insane final condition—was utterly overwhelming. His mind replayed Kagutsuchi's casual treatment of All Might, the Symbol of Peace, during their "sparring match." Kagutsuchi, a High Lord. Graviel, another. How, Izuku wondered, could a class of still-developing heroes possibly stand a chance against someone like that, even with a promise of restraint? The sheer impossibility of it weighed on him, a suffocating blanket of doubt. He clenched his fists, knuckles white, his gaze fixed on nothing, lost in the terrifying implications of the coming week.

This went on into the night. The fluorescent lights of the sitting area hummed, casting long, stark shadows as the hours crawled by. The initial shock began to give way to a simmering unease, a reluctance to disperse, as if leaving the room would somehow make the impossible truths they'd just learned more real, more inescapable. No one wanted to be alone with these thoughts.

Izuku, who had instinctively slid his chair to the furthest corner of the room, seeking a small measure of solitude for his churning thoughts, felt a presence beside him. Ochako Uraraka, Momo Yaoyorozu, Tenya Iida, and Mezo Shoji stood there, their faces etched with a shared, unspoken anxiety. Ochako's usual bright eyes were shadowed with deep, unsettling worry. Iida's posture, for once, lacked its characteristic rigidity, his hands uncharacteristically still at his sides. Momo's typically composed expression was strained, her gaze distant as she processed the enormity of the situation. And Shoji, ever the stoic, seemed even more so, his multiple arms held perfectly still, his quiet presence radiating an almost impenetrable calm that belied the turmoil he must have felt. They exchanged looks in silence, a silent acknowledgment of the crushing weight bearing down on them all, as if a shared glance could somehow ease the impossible burden.

The following day, the grim reality of their situation settled even deeper. Class 1-A had been allowed to see Aoyama in the detention infirmary. The sterile white room, devoid of the usual sounds of a busy medical ward, felt unnaturally quiet, amplifying the heavy atmosphere. Aoyama sat on his cot, staring blankly ahead, his gaze fixed on some unseen point on the wall. He was unresponsive to their presence, a stark, heartbreaking contrast to the boisterous, princely aura he had always tried to project—perhaps as a way of standing out, an unconscious need to show what was odd about him, or perhaps as a way of diverting attention for the more cynical among them, like Bakugo.

Ochako, her heart aching with a mix of sympathy and lingering confusion, approached cautiously, delicately. She reached out, gently placing her hand over his, a silent plea to coax some response from him. "Aoyama-kun?" she whispered, her voice soft, tentative. "Are you... are you okay?"

But Aoyama remained still, his eyes unblinking, his hand limp beneath hers. Izuku, watching from the doorway, felt a fresh wave of despair. Aoyama looked even worse than he had the other day, his skin paler, his frame seemingly more fragile. And on the bedside table, untouched, still wrapped in its clear plastic, was the breakfast sandwich Izuku had left for him yesterday. The sight was a chilling confirmation of Aoyama's profound distress, a stark reminder of the immense challenge that lay ahead.

Back in their classroom, with lessons suspended for the rest of the day, Class 1-A remained in a state of suspended animation, trying to grapple with the unbelievably fantastic situation they now found themselves in. The air was thick with their unspoken thoughts, the sheer unexpectedness of it all making it hard to cope. It was one thing to discover a classmate was a spy under villainous thrall; it was an entirely different, cosmic horror to learn about ancient, god-like beings, a hidden power within their own ranks, and a week-long deadline to fight one of these entities. It was all so much more than just Aoyama.

The silence, however, was finally shattered. Katsuki Bakugo, unable to bear the oppressive quiet any longer, snapped up from his seat with a resounding slam of his hands on his desk. "What the hell are you all waiting for?!" he roared, his voice cutting through the stunned air like a knife.

The class flinched, turning their wide, startled eyes towards him. Bakugo, ignoring their stunned reactions, continued, his crimson eyes blazing with familiar, furious energy. "We've got some goddamn training to do! To fight this angel or whatever he is and show him not to mess with us!"

The others were even more stunned into silence, hardly believing that the blonde could return to his usual bluster so quickly, so fiercely, in the face of such overwhelming, existential revelations.

Then, a high-pitched, almost panicked voice broke the renewed quiet. It was Minoru Mineta, his small frame trembling. "What the hell are you even saying, Bakugo?!" he shrieked, his eyes wide with terror. "What goddamn training would even ready us to fight someone that could literally walk all over All Might without even noticing?! We all saw the footage of the freaking janitor slapping him like he was a battered housewife for crying out loud!"

Most of the class could only wince at Mineta's crude, yet undeniably accurate, outburst. There was no reprimand, no indignant retort. Instead, their heads bowed, a collective admission of the terrifying fact. They had indeed seen the footage, the casual, almost dismissive way Kagutsuchi had handled the Symbol of Peace. The memory, once a source of awe, now fueled a burning, helpless frustration. Their Quirks, their training, their very understanding of power, felt utterly inadequate against such a force. A bitter, bristling sense of helplessness settled over them, a suffocating realization of how truly outmatched they were.

Bakugo, with a sharp click of his tongue, glared at Mineta, his expression a mixture of irritation and fierce resolve. "So what?!" he barked back, his voice cutting through the heavy air. "All we gotta do is fight this Gravi-whatever his name is, give him a bloody nose, and Aoyama's home free! Besides," he scoffed, a sneer twisting his lips, "there's no way that bastard can possibly take on all of us!" His bravado, though a familiar shield, seemed to crackle with unusual desperation.

"You're wrong, Kacchan," Izuku's voice cut in, quiet but firm, startling the class even more than Bakugo's outburst. He slowly pushed himself up from his chair, his gaze fixed on the floor. "Graviel can indeed take on all of us, even with him holding back." The words hung in the air, a cold, undeniable truth that only deepened the class's collective dread. If even Izuku, who had faced the Lords and survived, believed this, their situation was truly dire.

Bakugo's head snapped towards Izuku, his crimson eyes narrowing dangerously. With a few explosive steps, he was in front of Deku, grabbing him by the collar of his uniform. "What the hell do you know, Mister Post-Human?!" he snarled, pulling Izuku closer until their faces were inches apart. "Just 'cause you're some kind of freak of nature now doesn't mean you get to decide for all of us! And don't even think you're getting off over this, Deku! You and me still have a fucking score to settle after all of this blows over!"

Lunchtime arrived, but the usual boisterous energy of the U.A. cafeteria was noticeably absent from Class 1-A's table. A heavy, almost funereal quiet hung over them as they picked at their food, their faces etched with profound weariness. This subdued demeanor didn't go unnoticed by the other students, particularly those from Class 1-B, who cast curious, wary glances their way. Even Izuku, usually eager for his favorite Katsudon, sat quietly, his bowl untouched, the familiar comfort of the meal lost amidst the swirling turmoil in his mind.

Melissa Shield, who had joined their table and sat next to Izuku, leaned in, her expression a mixture of deep concern and the same dread that seemed to grip them all. "Uncle Might told me some of it," she began, her voice low, almost a whisper, "about Aoyama and... well, everything. But he said there's more. Can you... can you tell me the rest?" Her gaze swept over Izuku and his friends, a silent plea for the full, terrifying truth.

Izuku looked at Melissa, his expression unreadable, a complex mix of the dread that still clung to him and a flicker of something else—a protective instinct. He nodded slowly. "Yeah," he murmured, his voice barely audible above the cafeteria's distant din. "But not here. Somewhere more private."

Moments later, they found themselves in a secluded corner of one of U.A.'s many courtyards, a patch of green surrounded by the imposing school buildings. Ochako, Momo, Iida, and Shoji positioned themselves around them, forming a loose, silent perimeter, as if to ensure their conversation wouldn't be disturbed or overheard. The air, though open, felt charged with the weight of the secrets about to be shared.

As Izuku began to speak, recounting the full, unvarnished truth of Graviel's demands, the nature of the Lords, and the impossible assessment that awaited them, Melissa's face grew progressively paler. Her eyes, usually bright with ingenuity, widened with dawning horror. The casual mention of cosmic beings and a fight against one of them, even one holding back, was clearly more than she had anticipated. When he finished, she was visibly shaken, her hands trembling slightly.

"Izuku," Melissa finally managed, her voice thin, laced with genuine fear and a desperate need to help. "Can I... can I help? With support items? Maybe even call my dad? He could work on something, anything, to help you guys be better prepared!"

Izuku looked at her, his gaze distant, his jaw tight. He shook his head, a single, decisive movement. "No," he said, his voice sharper than he intended, almost a snappish refusal. "This isn't your fight, Melissa. It's ours." The words were blunt, born of the grim futility he felt.

Melissa stared at him, stunned. Her offer, usually a source of immense pride and capability, had been dismissed with such finality. She opened her mouth to protest, to argue, but the sheer, overwhelming despair in Izuku's eyes, the profound weariness in his posture, silenced her. He knew something she didn't, a depth of power and hopelessness that even her brilliant mind couldn't bridge. The realization hit her with the force of a physical blow.

Izuku, bowing his head, ran a hand through his tresses, the movement heavy with resignation. "The best we can hope for," he murmured, his voice barely a whisper, "is that Graviel is explicitly forbidden from killing mortals. But..." He trailed off, the unspoken implication hanging in the air like a shroud.

Ochako, her brow furrowed with concern, leaned closer. "But what, Izuku?" she asked, her voice soft, her gaze searching his. "What would that mean for you? You're an Agito."

The question hung there, sharp and chilling. Izuku had no answer. Was this "assessment" a loophole? A way for Graviel to eliminate a perceived threat, an unstable element in the cosmic balance, under the guise of a test? The thought that Graviel might be using this challenge to try and kill him, specifically, sent a fresh wave of ice through his veins. He could only stew in silence, the implication washing over them all. For Ochako, Momo, Iida, and Shoji, who had just begun to grasp the true nature of Izuku's power, the possibility that he might not be protected by the same rules as them made everything even more hopeless, if that was even possible. The courtyard, once a place of quiet refuge, now felt like a cage, tightening around them.

The faculty room, usually a hub of activity and lively discussion, had settled into a profound, almost oppressive silence. The recent events, the unsettling visit from Graviel, and the impossible ultimatum had cast a long shadow over the pro heroes. They'd barely been able to function at their best in their own classes since the revelations, their minds preoccupied with the cosmic stakes now at play.

Toshinori, in his civilian form, sat hunched over his desk, a stack of ungraded papers before him, but his gaze was distant, unfocused. His cup of coffee, long since gone cold, sat forgotten beside his elbow. With a heavy sigh, he cupped his face in his hands. He was still reeling from how quickly things had spiraled out of control, how a seemingly contained situation had erupted into a global, existential threat in the blink of an eye. He shouldn't have been surprised, though. Not really. If his own terrifying experiences with Kagutsuchi were anything to go by, this was precisely the kind of unpredictable, overwhelming chaos the Lords brought with them. The thought of his students, his precious Class 1-A, facing down a being of such unfathomable power twisted his gut.

Aizawa, his perpetual weariness seeming to deepen with each passing moment, approached Toshinori's desk. "Toshinori," he began, his voice low, cutting through the quiet. "What's our next move? Train? Drills?" He paused, his gaze fixed on his colleague.

Toshinori slowly lowered his hands, his eyes still distant. "I don't know, Shota," he admitted, his voice heavy with doubt. "What training could possibly prepare them for... for that? It feels futile."

Aizawa's eyes narrowed, a flicker of his usual resolve returning. "Futile or not, we still have to do something. Two days have already passed. And yeah," he conceded, his voice rough, "I'm well aware of how hopeless it all sounds. But Toshinori, we can't just let that bastard get away with this."

Toshinori finally met Aizawa's gaze, a flicker of his old fire returning, though it was quickly overshadowed by profound weariness. "I know, Shota. Believe me, I know. Every fiber of my being screams to fight, to protect them. But we also can't ignore the reality of what we're up against." He paused, a hand instinctively rising to rub his temple. A faint wave of dizziness, a phantom echo of a past trauma, washed over him. He could still feel the jarring impact, the sheer, unimaginable force that had sent him sprawling. "I still get dizzy just thinking about the first time Kagutsuchi… slapped me."

Aizawa blinked, a slow, deliberate movement, then a dry, almost imperceptible smirk touched his lips. "More like you got slapped several dozen more times, if memory serves. But who's really counting?" He pushed off the desk, straightening up. "Look, I'm not saying we're going to win this easily, or even at all. But we have to try. We have to show Graviel that we're not just going to take his bullshit lying down. We're not going to let him dictate the fate of our students, or anyone else, without a fight." His eyes, though still heavy-lidded, hardened with fierce, unyielding resolve. "I'm willing to do something that still matters. Are you?"

Toshinori still looked doubtful, his gaze fixed on some unseen point beyond Aizawa's shoulder. Another long moment passed, thick with the unspoken weight of their impossible situation, before he finally met Aizawa's eyes and nodded firmly, a silent, grim acceptance.

Just then, the faculty room door slid open with a soft hiss. Both heroes turned to see Kagutsuchi standing there, dressed in his familiar janitor's uniform, a mop bucket clutched in one hand. His golden eyes, usually alight with mischief, held a rare, serious glint as he looked between them.

"Overhearing your conversation," Kagutsuchi began, his voice surprisingly soft, "it seems you two are in a bit of a bind. And, perhaps, I can be of assistance."

Aizawa's eyes narrowed, his suspicion palpable. "And what exactly would you be willing to offer, Kagutsuchi?" he asked, his tone flat, clearly not trusting the High Lord's sudden benevolence.

Toshinori, however, pushed himself up from his desk, a spark of desperate hope in his eyes. "What is it, Kagutsuchi? What are you willing to do?"

A faint, knowing smile touched Kagutsuchi's lips. "Gather Class 1-A at Ground Gamma. Make sure they're all dressed in their gym uniforms. I'll tell them there. And you'll need to hurry."

At Ground Gamma, the sprawling training facility designed to simulate various urban environments, Class 1-A was gathered, all dressed in their U.A. gym uniforms. The usual boisterous energy that filled the training grounds was conspicuously absent, replaced by a tense, nervous quiet. Most of them stood in small, anxious clusters, exchanging worried glances.

"Do you think this is it?" Mashirao Ojiro, his tail twitching nervously, voiced the question hanging in the air. "The training that's supposed to prepare us for... for that?"

Tenya Iida, adjusting his glasses with a hand that trembled almost imperceptibly, nodded, his voice a strained whisper. "It can only be. Aizawa-sensei explicitly stated that we must, at the very least, prepare ourselves." His posture, usually so rigid and confident, seemed to sag under the weight of the impending confrontation.

A few students looked around doubtfully, their expressions etched with apprehension. The sheer, overwhelming power of a Lord, even one holding back, felt insurmountable. What kind of training could possibly bridge that gap in a mere week?

Then, a voice called from the distance, cutting through their quiet anxieties. "Class 1-A! Over here!"

They all turned to see Kagutsuchi, dressed in his familiar caretaker's uniform, waving them over with a wide, almost unsettlingly cheerful smile. He looked utterly out of place amidst the industrial training ground, a mop bucket still clutched in one hand.

Reluctantly, the students began to gather around him, their movements slow and hesitant. The memory of the video they had been shown, the casual, almost contemptuous ease with which this man—whom they had all assumed was just a humble janitor—had dispatched All Might, Graviel's fellow High Lord, was fresh in their minds. The cheerful smile on his face now seemed less friendly and more like a predator's grin, and a collective shiver ran down their spines.

Kagutsuchi put down the mop bucket with a soft thud and clapped his hands together, rubbing them briskly. "Alright, children!" he chirped, his voice bright and eager. "Are we ready?"

The students stiffened, a collective ripple of unease passing through them. Minoru Mineta, his small frame trembling, managed to squeak out, "R-Ready for what?"

Kagutsuchi's smile widened, his golden eyes sparkling with almost childlike excitement. "Why, training, of course! Ah? Ah?" He paused, looking at their still guarded, apprehensive faces. "Oh, come on, this is going to be a blast!"

The students couldn't help but be both unnerved and bemused. It was as if this man, this cosmic entity who had effortlessly humbled the Symbol of Peace, was just setting them up for a series of mundane, albeit intense, gym drills. The sheer incongruity of it left them bewildered, unsure whether to be terrified or simply confused.

Kagutsuchi's smile never wavered, even as he leaned in conspiratorially, his voice dropping to a stage whisper that somehow carried perfectly across the silent training ground. "Now, for today's special lesson, we're going to do something a little different. Something to really get those Quirks flowing, and those minds sharp." He straightened up, his gaze sweeping over each of them, lingering for a fraction of a second on Izuku. "Your task, Class 1-A," he announced, his voice returning to its cheerful, almost sing-song tone, "is to... take a crack at me!"

A long beat of stunned silence descended upon Ground Gamma. The only sound was the faint hum of distant city traffic. Then, as one, nearly every student released a sharp, simultaneous "HUH?!" Their eyes, wide with disbelief, seemed to nearly pop out of their sockets. Eijiro Kirishima's hardened face went slack, his jaw hanging open. Mina Ashido's pink skin seemed to drain of all color. Even the usually composed Momo Yaoyorozu gasped, her hand flying to her mouth. Only Izuku Midoriya and Katsuki Bakugo, though equally stunned, merely gaped, their mouths hanging open in a silent, incredulous O.

"That's right!" Kagutsuchi exclaimed, his voice booming with renewed enthusiasm, completely unfazed by their collective shock. He spread his arms wide, a grand gesture. "For your training, in order to get ready for your fight with Graviel, you'll need to use me for practice!"

Minoru Mineta, scared out of his mind, took a shaky step back, his voice barely a whisper. "T-T-Take a c-crack at you? More like you're going to be taking cracks at us!"

Kagutsuchi scoffed playfully, a dismissive wave of his hand. "Oh, come now, little grape. Don't be such a worrywart. I'll hold back, every step of the way. Just enough to give you a challenge, and just enough so you have something of an idea once Graviel rolls around. It will all have been worth it, I assure you." He clapped his hands together again, the sound sharp and decisive, like a preschool teacher getting them ready for an exciting, albeit terrifying, activity. "Now!"

Class 1-A still seemed every bit reluctant, weighing their options or simply too frightened to move. The idea of attacking a High Lord, even one who promised to hold back, was unfathomable. It felt like walking into a meat grinder.

Kagutsuchi, sensing their hesitation, offered another incentive, his smile softening slightly. "And if ever you become exhausted," he began, his voice taking on a more soothing, almost hypnotic quality, "when your bodies ache and you can't move anymore... I will restore you."

The students all took a pause, a collective intake of breath. Their eyes, though still wary, widened with a new kind of astonishment.

Kagutsuchi nodded, confirming their unspoken question. "That's right. Whenever you've given it your all, when your Quirks are depleted and your muscles scream in protest, I will restore you back to full strength." He began to pace slowly, his footsteps echoing faintly on the concrete, as if giving a lecture. "You will remain here, in Ground Gamma, for the next three days."

Shock rippled through the class once more, even deeper than before. Three days?! Away from their homes, away from their normal lives? It was an unprecedented demand.

But Kagutsuchi continued, completely oblivious to their renewed dismay. "When I restore you, you will have made a full recovery. A full night's sleep, even if you just collapsed moments before. And yes," he added, a twinkle in his golden eyes, "even your personal hygiene will be taken care of, complete with whatever damage is done to your gym uniforms."

The class was utterly stunned, even more so than before. The implications of his power, not just to fight, but to restore them so completely, so effortlessly, was beyond anything they had ever conceived. It was a power that defied logic, defied Quirks, defied everything they knew about the limits of the human body. It was terrifying, and strangely, undeniably, alluring.

Kagutsuchi then held up a single finger, his expression turning slightly more serious, though the playful glint in his eyes remained. "Of course, this is only possible because I filed a formal request for it from up top."

Izuku, ever the conscientious one, found his voice, a tremor of concern in his tone. "Is... is that okay?"

Kagutsuchi pursed his lips, a mock-somber expression crossing his face. "Well, if it means being suspended from directing any company plays for the next five hundred years, then yes," he declared with a dramatic sigh, "that's a sacrifice I'm willing to make."

Another beat of silence, this one filled with a new kind of bewilderment. Then, Denki Kaminari, his eyes wide and confused, voiced the question on everyone's mind. "You guys have company plays?"

Before Kagutsuchi could respond, Katsuki Bakugo stepped forward, a blunt "Hey!" cutting through the lingering confusion. His crimson eyes, usually blazing with aggression, held a rare intensity as they fixed on Kagutsuchi. "You mean it?" he demanded, his voice low, almost a growl.

Kagutsuchi met his gaze, a casual nod. "Yes."

Sparks began to crackle around Bakugo's hands, a faint, ominous crackle in the air. "So that means... we don't have to hold back?"

"Precisely," Kagutsuchi replied, his tone still perfectly casual, as if discussing the weather. "That's part of the point of the whole activity, isn't it? To push your limits."

A manic grin began to spread across Bakugo's face, his eyes widening with dangerous excitement. The sparks around his palms intensified. "You swear," he pressed, his voice vibrating with barely contained anticipation, "that this will make us stronger?"

Kagutsuchi's smile returned, broad and confident. "Yes, Katsuki. It will make you stronger. In fact, by my estimation, you'll have at least a month's worth of training by the time we're done. Possibly more."

Shock rippled through the class, even reaching Bakugo, whose wide eyes reflected a mixture of awe and dawning realization. He stood there for a moment, the manic grin fading slightly as he processed the sheer implications of Kagutsuchi's words, pondering the possibilities of such accelerated growth.

Hanta Sero, ever the skeptic, finally broke the silence. "Will... will any of this actually work?" he asked, his voice laced with doubt.

Momo Yaoyorozu, however, straightened her posture, a newfound determination in her eyes. "Yes," she stated, her voice firm.

Kyoka Jirou turned to her, a hint of surprise in her tone. "Yaomomo? Are you sure?"

Momo nodded confidently. "The science backs this up. When we engage in strenuous physical activity, our muscle fibers experience microscopic tears. It's during the recovery period that these tears are repaired and rebuilt stronger, and our bodies adapt, improving muscle memory and overall efficiency. Kagutsuchi-san's ability to instantly restore us means we can bypass the usual lengthy recovery time, allowing us to reap the benefits of intense training almost immediately, repeatedly. It's like compressing weeks of growth into mere hours of effort."

"That sounds utterly broken!" Kaminari exclaimed, his voice a mix of awe and disbelief, drawing astonished looks from the rest of the class.

Rikido Sato, his brow furrowed, agreed. "Sounds unfair, more like it!"

"Shut the hell up, you retards!" Bakugo snapped, turning sharply on them, his eyes blazing. "If it means we can get ahead of the rest, then why the hell not?! Like hell I'm going to pass up on this!" His explosive declaration silenced them instantly.

Shoto Todoroki, his voice quiet but firm, chimed in, "He's right. If it means I can get stronger too, maybe even get a chance to perfect my control over hot and cold, then I'm in." His heterochromatic eyes held a rare intensity.

The others still looked doubtful, their expressions a mix of apprehension and lingering confusion. Ochako Uraraka, her brow furrowed with concern, finally spoke up. "But... what about our parents? Won't they worry?"

Kagutsuchi waved a dismissive hand. "Oh, they've already been informed that there will be a surprise training camp for you all. Which isn't technically untrue, is it?" He chuckled. "The school, meaning myself, will provide you with everything you need in the meantime."

"What about food?" Eijiro Kirishima asked, his voice a little gruff, his stomach rumbling in protest at the thought of three days without proper meals.

Kagutsuchi simply pointed with his thumb over his shoulder, towards the main entrance of Ground Gamma. There, neat stacks of crates were visible, filled with ready-to-eat meals, bottles of mineral water, and other provisions that looked like they could last at least two months. "I may be able to restore you," he said with a shrug, "but as far as nutrition is concerned, that's entirely up to you."

The entire class exchanged looks again, a silent conversation passing between them, still in disbelief that this was really happening. Izuku himself still looked a bit unsure, his brow furrowed in thought, before his expression settled into a determined frown. "I'm in, too," he declared, his voice firm, a quiet resolve hardening his features.

Slowly, more and more of the students voiced their participation, a ripple of hesitant agreement spreading through the group. They realized there would be no turning back for them once they committed. If it would give them a fighting chance against the seemingly impossible, then they would take it.

"And remember," Izuku added, his voice rising slightly, his gaze sweeping over his classmates, "who we're also doing this all for."

The thought of Yuga Aoyama, pale and unresponsive in the infirmary, flashed through their minds, flaring their determination even more. A collective sense of purpose, grim but resolute, settled over Class 1-A.

With this, Kagutsuchi, a wide, almost triumphant smile on his face, clapped his hands together. "Excellent! Then let the training begin!"