The oppressive darkness of Tartarus was an entity unto itself—a suffocating blanket woven from reinforced steel and despair. Deep within the maximum-security facility's lowest levels, in a cell where no natural light ever penetrated, Tomura Shigaraki sat with his eyes closed. The constant, rhythmic hum of the facility's massive power grid—designed to maintain the countless Quirk Suppression fields throughout the underground complex—was a grating presence that had become white noise over the months. The day's events—the psychic echo of a fierce, distant battle that resonated even within these soundproof walls—had been a distant, almost forgotten thing. He had smiled then, a small, knowing upturn of his lips. He was in prison, but he was not forgotten.

Suddenly, the hum ceased.

The lights in the cell flickered once, then died, plunging the entire facility into total, absolute blackness. Emergency lighting failed to activate. Backup generators remained silent. Shigaraki's eyes snapped open, a crimson smile splitting his face in the dark. It was a grin of pure, unadulterated relief. The plan. Sensei's coded messages, delivered through the subtle manipulation of his food rations and the sequence of guard shifts, had been confirmed.

Two minutes. That was all they had before the emergency systems would kick in.

He heard the quiet electronic chirp of a security door disengaging—a sound that should have been impossible with the power out. A silent figure entered the cell, moving with practiced stealth. The infiltrator wore a guard's uniform, complete with the distinctive black tactical gear of Tartarus security. In the darkness, Shigaraki could barely make out the man's face, but he recognized the telltale shimmer of a shapeshifting Quirk at work.

The false guard carried a small, heavy bag and a specialized override device—something that could temporarily disable even the most advanced Quirk Suppression Collars. Working quickly, he removed Shigaraki's collar and placed it around his own neck, the mechanisms clicking into place with practiced precision. He pulled a face mask over his mouth and nose, then slumped into the chair in the corner, positioning himself to mimic a prisoner in deep sleep.

Shigaraki, now free, donned the guard's uniform with swift efficiency. The tactical vest, utility belt, and security badge transformed him from prisoner to authority figure in moments. It was a perfect exchange, a phantom-like switch that was simultaneously happening in three other strategically chosen locations throughout the prison's labyrinthine structure—locations where his handpicked recruits awaited their own liberation.

When the emergency lighting finally flickered to life—dim red illumination that cast everything in an ominous glow—Shigaraki was no longer a prisoner. He was a guard. A ghost. A man with security clearance and intimate knowledge of the facility's layout.

He moved with quiet urgency through the corridors of Level 6—the deepest and most secure section of Tartarus, reserved for the most dangerous criminals. The prison's design was a vertical maze: each level descended deeper underground, with increasingly sophisticated security measures. Level 1 housed minor offenders, while Level 6 was reserved for villains who posed existential threats to society.

The facility was already in a state of controlled chaos. Guards were moving through the corridors, but their movements lacked the frantic panic of a full-scale emergency. The blackout had been brief enough to avoid triggering the facility's most extreme lockdown protocols. Security personnel were conducting routine sweeps, checking cells and ensuring all systems were functioning properly. Shigaraki blended seamlessly into their ranks, his stolen uniform and confident bearing making him invisible among the crowd.

As he navigated the sterile corridors, Shigaraki caught glimpses of other guards moving with similar purpose—figures that walked just a little too purposefully, held themselves just a little too stiffly. The coordination was flawless; each complicit guard was executing their part of the plan with professional precision. He knew exactly who they were liberating—each one carefully chosen by him for the new League—but catching sight of them now would compromise the operation's compartmentalized structure.

Using his memorized map of the facility, he made his way toward his designated target: Stain, held in a high-security cell on Level 5. The Hero Killer's liberation required navigating through a series of blast doors and security checkpoints, each one requiring the stolen keycard and a knowledge of guard patrol patterns that only an insider would possess.

The journey upward was treacherous. Level 6 to Level 5 required passing through a checkpoint designed to prevent exactly this kind of movement. Biometric scanners, metal detectors, and armed guards created a gauntlet that would have stopped any conventional escape attempt. But Shigaraki's stolen credentials and the carefully orchestrated timing allowed him to pass through without incident.

Level 5 was a maze of specialized containment units, each one designed for a specific type of dangerous criminal. Stain's cell was located in the facility's "Ideological Extremist" wing—a section reserved for villains whose crimes were motivated by twisted philosophical beliefs rather than simple greed or violence.

Shigaraki found the cell easily, a reinforced steel door marked with biohazard warnings and psychological evaluation notes. The Hero Killer sat motionless in the darkness, but his eyes snapped open the moment the door began to open. There was no surprise in his gaze—only grim satisfaction.

"Took you long enough," Stain growled, his voice hoarse from months of silence.

Working quickly, Shigaraki removed Stain's Quirk Suppression Collar and provided him with a guard's uniform. The Hero Killer's transformation was remarkable—the fanatical intensity that had made him a legend among villains was carefully masked behind the professional demeanor of a prison guard. He adjusted the red bandana that had been hidden in the uniform's tactical vest, a small symbol of his true identity concealed beneath the disguise.

Now moving as a pair, they began their ascent through Tartarus's security levels. The journey was a careful balance of speed and stealth—too fast, and they would attract unwanted attention; too slow, and they would miss their narrow window of opportunity.

Level 5 to Level 4: They passed through another checkpoint, this one staffed by guards who were conducting routine security inspections in the wake of the power outage. Their stolen uniforms and confident bearing sold the deception perfectly.

Level 4 to Level 3: Here they encountered their closest call. A senior guard—someone with enough experience to potentially notice inconsistencies in their story or recognize that their faces didn't match the facility's personnel roster. Stain handled the problem with swift efficiency, a small blade appearing in his hand for just long enough to silence the threat permanently.

Throughout their ascent, Shigaraki caught occasional glimpses of the larger operation. A guard moving too purposefully down a side corridor. The sound of footsteps where there should have been silence. The subtle signs that his chosen recruits were being extracted simultaneously throughout the facility. But he never sought them out—the plan demanded they remain separated until the final convergence point.

Their final target was the most crucial: Kurogiri, held in the facility's most secure wing on Level 3. Unlike the others, the Warp Gate villain was considered too valuable and too dangerous to be housed in a standard maximum-security cell. His containment chamber was a technological marvel—a hermetically sealed room lined with Quirk-dampening materials and monitored by a dedicated team of specialists.

They found the chamber at the end of a sterile white corridor that looked more like a medical facility than a prison. Multiple layers of security doors barred their path, each requiring different authorization codes and biometric scans. A lone guard sat at a monitoring station outside the final door, his attention focused on a bank of screens displaying Kurogiri's vital signs and containment status.

The guard looked up as they approached, confusion flickering across his features. "What are you doing here? This area is restricted to authorized personnel only."

Shigaraki moved with fluid precision. His hand shot out, fingers spread wide, making contact with the guard's face before the man could cry out. The disintegration was swift and silent—fine powder falling to the floor where moments before a living person had sat.

Working quickly, Shigaraki rummaged through the dusty remains to retrieve a gleaming keycard. He swiped it against the lock, and the door hissed open with a pneumatic release.

Inside, Kurogiri sat strapped to a specialized restraint chair, multiple Quirk Suppression Collars wrapped around his neck and limbs. The sight of his immobilized subordinate ignited a fresh wave of rage in Shigaraki's chest. He and Stain worked swiftly to deactivate the collars and cut through the restraints.

"Welcome back," Shigaraki said, his voice a low growl.

Kurogiri's misty form began to coalesce as his powers returned, the familiar purple-black energy swirling around his body.

Finally, they reached the maintenance bay—a industrial space that connected to the facility's loading dock. Here, in the shadows of machinery and service equipment, they found their rendezvous point.

"The others?" Kurogiri asked, his voice carrying the familiar electronic distortion.

"My recruits should be arriving shortly," Shigaraki replied, a note of satisfaction in his voice. "If the plan worked as intended—"

His words were cut off as three other figures emerged from the shadows of the maintenance bay. They moved like ghosts, their faces hidden behind tactical masks, their identities concealed for operational security even though Shigaraki knew exactly who each one was. Each one had been liberated by a different complicit guard, extracted from different levels of the facility, and brought to this convergence point through separate routes.

Shigaraki allowed himself a small smile of satisfaction as he observed his carefully chosen recruits. Each one represented a specific skill set, a particular brand of chaos that would serve the new League's purposes. But their identities would remain masked until they reached their destination—another layer of security in case the operation was somehow compromised.

With a final, desperate burst of energy, Kurogiri manifested a portal—a swirling vortex of black and purple that would transport them far from Tartarus and its failed security. As the five figures stepped through the dimensional gateway, a new voice—familiar and commanding—echoed through the swirling darkness.

"A job well done, Tomura. A new chapter begins."

The portal collapsed behind them, leaving no trace of their passage except for the growing alarm bells that would soon wake all of Japan to the reality that five of the world's most dangerous criminals had vanished into the night.

The U.A. gym, a cavernous space of polished wood floors and high-beamed ceilings, was a symphony of controlled chaos. The echoes of shouts and the percussive thumps of impacts filled the air. In one corner, two blurs of motion circled a temporary track. One was the steady, mechanical precision of Tenya Iida, his calves pumping with the powerful roar of his engines. The other was the golden, flowing energy of Izuku Midoriya's Agito armor in its Storm Form—a brilliant green that moved with graceful ferocity.

They were neck and neck, two final laps left. Iida, ever the picture of focused determination, pushed his Recipro Burst to its limit, his expression a mask of intense concentration. Izuku, however, seemed to move with a serene, almost effortless quality. His Storm Form, a physical manifestation of his power's nascent connection to the wind, gave him an almost ethereal glide. They passed the halfway mark on the final lap, and Iida pulled ahead by a hair. The crowd of their classmates cheered them on, a low, rumbling wave of encouragement.

Izuku smiled. It wasn't a smile of bravado or arrogance, but one of pure, unadulterated focus. A new kind of energy surged through his body—not the brute force of a single Quirk, but a resonant, harmonious power. In a single, breathtaking moment, he accelerated. The blur of green and gold became a streak, leaving Iida's engines to stutter behind. Izuku crossed the finish line a full second ahead, the wind of his passage a gentle caress on Iida's cheek.

The victory felt like an affirmation of Aoyama's choice.

It had been just that morning, with the first rays of sunlight piercing the blinds of a private meeting room. The sterile white walls were a stark contrast to the loving embrace Aoyama's parents had given him—a fierce, bone-crushing hug that threatened to squeeze all the air from his lungs. They wept, not for the loss of his Quirk, but for the relief of having him back, of being free from All For One's cruel, unseen hand.

"Our darling boy," his mother had whispered, her voice thick with emotion. "You're safe. We're all safe."

Nezu had been a quiet observer in the corner, sipping tea from a small porcelain cup. When the parents finally let go, he offered a somber warning. "You cannot return to your home for the time being. It is no longer safe."

Aoyama's parents had looked at each other, and then back at their son, a silent question passing between them. They had smiled—a small, weary but resolute expression.

"That's all right, sir," his father had said, his voice firm. "We don't need a home. We just need to be together."

Their gratitude for U.A. was a torrent, a humbling display of tearful thanks that Nezu waved away with a modest paw. "This is only the beginning of a difficult path for Yuga, a path he must walk alone," Nezu had said, his eyes on Aoyama. "We simply gave him a starting point."

Now, in the gym, Aoyama sat in a corner, dressed in a simple U.A. gym uniform. His hair, having grown a bit longer during his confinement, was no longer perfectly styled. He didn't look like the flawless princely figure he had meticulously cultivated. He just looked like a student—rough around the edges, still trying to find his footing.

Beside him, Momo Yaoyorozu sat with a gentle, reassuring presence. "Focus on your breath, Aoyama-kun," she said softly. "Breathe in... hold... and out."

He followed her instructions, the breathing a practiced rhythm. Earlier, he had suffered another fit of splitting headaches—a jarring, painful experience. Izuku, who had seen it happen, had told him it was a natural symptom of his Agito power trying to reassert itself after his Quirk was removed, a chaotic, violent struggle for dominance within his own body. Momo's meditation exercises and breathing techniques were meant to help him with self-control, to help him find some semblance of peace amidst the internal war.

He closed his eyes, and with the sound of his friends' determined efforts around him, he began to breathe.

Izuku's armor shimmered, then collapsed into a soft, golden light, leaving him in his gym uniform. He looked barely winded, a faint sheen of sweat on his brow the only indication of the intense effort. Iida, by contrast, was panting, his hand on his knees as he fought to catch his breath.

"You need to work on your performance, Midoriya," Iida said, straightening up. His voice, while tired, was still filled with his usual serious energy. "Even after our grueling training under Kagutsuchi and our battle with Graviel, we must push ourselves. We must go beyond."

"Plus ultra!" Kirishima shouted from the sidelines, pumping a fist into the air. "We've all gotten so much stronger! I can still hardly believe it!" He exemplified this by showcasing his hardened skin, which looked sharper, harder, more refined than when he first entered U.A.

A chorus of agreement and excited chatter rippled through the class, their post-battle adrenaline still a potent force.

Izuku smiled, but shook his head. "Don't let it go to your heads," he warned, his voice soft but firm. "Graviel was holding back the entire time, and he showed us that we still have a long, long way to go."

"The only one with a long way to go is you, Deku," a familiar, explosive voice barked. Bakugo strode toward them, his hands in his pockets. "You're the one who needs to get strong enough to actually fight him. To beat him."

Izuku's smile faltered. He opened his mouth to brush the comment off, but the truth of it was a bitter, unshakeable stone in his stomach. He was strong, but he was not that strong. Not yet.

"Bakugo, come on," Kirishima said, a light note of rebuke in his voice. "Don't be a jerk."

"He knows I'm right," Bakugo retorted, not looking at Kirishima, his eyes locked on Izuku. He simply stood there, a challenge in his gaze. "Fight me," he demanded, his voice a low growl that carried over the buzzing conversations.

A hush fell over the gym. The surprise wasn't that he had challenged Izuku—everyone knew their long, complicated history—but that he had done it now, so soon after the devastating fight.

Izuku shook his head slowly, the ghost of his smile gone. "Kacchan, we just finished the workout. Everyone's still fresh from the fight with Graviel..."

"Bullshit," Bakugo snapped, his fists clenching at his sides. "Don't give me that weak-ass excuse. You want to go beyond? You want to get stronger? Then you work yourselves to the bone until you can't stand anymore. Anything less is just pathetic."

A few of the students frowned at his harsh words, and Kirishima stepped forward, his expression hardening. "Now's not the time, Bakugo. We just got back. Everyone's still..."

Bakugo cut him off with a sharp click of his tongue, his face twisted in a snarl. He didn't offer a retort. Instead, he simply turned away, the scowl a permanent fixture on his face, and walked out of the gym without another word.

The class watched as Bakugo's form disappeared through the gym doors, drawing glances from a few of the others. Izuku let out a soft sigh, just wanting to move on, when a cheerful voice broke the silence.

"Hey, Midoriya-kun! Do you have any plans after school?" Uraraka asked, bouncing on the balls of her feet with a wide smile.

Izuku looked at her, blinking. "Um, no, not really. Why?"

"Karaoke!" she answered excitedly, gesturing to the group. "I just wanna relax after everything, you know? Let off some steam!"

The idea was met with enthusiastic agreement. A few more of their classmates—Mina, Kaminari, and Jiro—joined the small crowd, their faces bright with the prospect of a fun, stress-free evening. Izuku smiled slightly, a small, genuine expression, but he still hesitated. He wasn't sure if he should accept, if he was in the right headspace for a night out.

Just then, Kirishima clapped a hand on his shoulder, his grip firm but friendly. "Come on, man! We've earned it! All of us!" he said with a grin.

Izuku looked at the hopeful faces of his friends, at their shared exhaustion and determination. He returned Kirishima's smile, a little more brightly this time, and gave a small, awkward nod.

"Okay," he said. "Yeah, I'd like that."

A light cheer erupted from the group, the weight of the last few days momentarily lifting in the face of a simple night out with friends.

The television screen cast a grim, flickering light across the living room of Toshinori Yagi's modest home. The news was a torrent of urgent, frantic reports—a coordinated power outage in Tartarus, followed by an unprecedented jailbreak that had security experts baffled. Toshinori sat on the edge of his couch, his hands clasped tightly together, the weight of the breaking news settling like lead in his stomach.

His appearance had transformed dramatically since his encounter with Kagutsuchi. Gone were the gaunt, sunken features that had marked his years of decline. His frame had filled out, his hair had regained its golden luster, and his eyes—once shadowed and tired—now blazed with their old vibrant blue. Yet for all his physical restoration, the burden of responsibility still weighed heavily on his shoulders.

Beside him, Melissa Shield watched with growing concern. She had been staying with him while her father worked tirelessly to rebuild I-Island's infrastructure, and she had grown accustomed to the peaceful rhythm of their domestic life. But this news had shattered that tranquility like glass.

The anchor's voice droned on with clinical precision, listing the security measures that had somehow failed, the timeline of events that experts couldn't explain. Then came the names—a roll call of some of Japan's most dangerous criminals. When one particular name was spoken, Toshinori's entire body went rigid.

"Tomura Shigaraki."

The remote slipped from Toshinori's suddenly nerveless fingers, clattering to the floor. His breathing became shallow, and for a moment, the restored Symbol of Peace looked like nothing more than a man haunted by ghosts from his past.

"Uncle Might?" Melissa's voice was soft, tentative. She had never seen him react this way to anything—not even during their most difficult conversations about his heroic past. "Are you okay? You look like you've seen something terrible."

Toshinori ran a trembling hand through his restored hair, his gaze still locked on the screen where Shigaraki's mugshot glared back at him with those familiar, hate-filled red eyes. When he finally spoke, his voice was barely above a whisper.

"That young man... Tomura. He's the grandson of someone very dear to me. Someone who was like family." He paused, struggling with words that felt inadequate. "Her name was Nana Shimura. She was my mentor, my predecessor as the wielder of One For All. She was... she was like a mother to me."

Melissa's eyes widened. She had heard fragments of stories about his mentor over the years, but Toshinori rarely spoke of her directly. The pain was always too fresh, too raw.

"I failed her," he continued, his voice growing even quieter. "And I failed him. In all the months he was imprisoned in Tartarus, I visited him only once." The memory surfaced unbidden—that sterile visiting room, the reinforced glass between them, and Shigaraki's face twisted with such pure, venomous hatred that it had shaken Toshinori to his core.

"I thought I could reach him," Toshinori said, his hands clenching into fists. "I thought if I could just make him understand, help him see past the lies All For One had filled his head with... But the hatred in his eyes. It was so deep, so absolute. He looked at me like I was the architect of every pain he'd ever suffered."

The memory of that visit played out in vivid detail. Shigaraki had listened to his impassioned speech about redemption and second chances with growing fury, until finally erupting into a rage so violent that the guards had to restrain him. The last thing Toshinori had seen was Shigaraki screaming threats through the glass, his Decay quirk activating uselessly against his restraints.

"I left that place knowing I had failed again," Toshinori admitted. "Failed Nana's memory, failed that boy, failed everyone who counted on me to be better."

Melissa studied his profile—the sharp jawline, the way his shoulders seemed to carry the weight of the world. Then, with the same gentle determination that had always defined her, she reached out and placed her hand on his shoulder.

"Uncle Might," she said, her voice carrying a quiet strength that reminded him achingly of her father. "You can't save everyone. Even All Might couldn't do that." She squeezed his shoulder gently. "But that doesn't mean you stop trying. That's what makes you a hero, isn't it? Not the power, but the fact that you never give up on people."

For the first time since the news report began, Toshinori turned away from the screen to look at her. In Melissa's eyes, he saw an echo of the unwavering faith that David Shield had always shown in him, the same belief that had sustained him through his darkest moments.

"But what if I'm too late?" he asked, the question that had been gnawing at him finally given voice. "What if the boy I'm trying to save is already gone, consumed by the monster All For One created?"

Melissa's response was immediate and certain. "Then you help create something new. Something better." She smiled, and in that expression was all the optimism and determination that had made her father one of his closest friends. "Besides, you're not the same person who failed before. You're stronger now, aren't you? Not just physically, but in here." She tapped her chest, right over her heart.

A small smile began to tug at the corners of Toshinori's mouth—the first genuine expression of hope he'd worn since the news began. "When did you become so wise, young lady?"

"I learned from the best," she replied with a grin that was pure mischief. "Someone once told me that the mark of a true hero isn't never falling down—it's always getting back up."

"Did I say that?" Toshinori asked, his smile growing stronger.

"You did. When I was little, during one of your visits to I-Island." Her expression grew more serious. "And you're going to find a way to save him too. I know it."

The certainty in her voice was infectious. Toshinori felt some of the crushing weight lift from his shoulders, replaced by something he hadn't felt in months: purpose. Not the desperate, guilt-driven need to atone for past failures, but the clear, clean determination that had once made him the Symbol of Peace.

"Thank you, Melissa," he said quietly. "For reminding me who I'm supposed to be."

She beamed at him, then deliberately reached for the remote and changed the channel away from the news. The tension in the room began to ease as a cooking show filled the screen instead.

"Now," she said, settling back into the couch with renewed energy, "how about you tell me what you've been up to? And don't think I haven't noticed you've been avoiding my questions about my Support Course projects."

Toshinori chuckled, allowing himself to be drawn into lighter conversation. "Your projects, hmm? Should I be worried about what you and your classmates are cooking up in those labs?"

"Maybe," Melissa said with a playful wink. "We've been working on something really special. The new students are incredibly talented—some of their ideas are just brilliant."

"A secret project?" Toshinori asked, genuine curiosity replacing the earlier grief in his voice. "What kind of secret?"

Melissa's eyes sparkled with mischief. "The kind that would make a certain someone very proud. But you'll have to wait and see, Uncle Might. Good things come to those who wait."

"Patience was never one of my strong suits," Toshinori admitted with a laugh. "David used to say I had the attention span of a goldfish when it came to his inventions."

"Speaking of secrets," Toshinori said, his tone becoming playfully pointed as he settled back into the couch, "I've noticed you've been asking quite a few questions about a certain green-haired student lately."

Melissa's confident demeanor faltered immediately, a light blush creeping up her neck. "I... what do you mean? I ask about all the students sometimes..."

"Ah, but not the way you ask about Young Midoriya," Toshinori continued, his eyes twinkling with mischief. "Every time his name comes up, you get this particular look on your face. And wasn't it you who insisted on helping with his costume upgrades last week?"

"That was just... professional interest!" Melissa protested, her blush deepening. "His equipment needed improvements, and I'm in the Support Course, so naturally I would—"

"Naturally," Toshinori agreed with a knowing smile. "And I suppose it was purely professional when you asked me about his favorite foods? And his training schedule? And whether he had any hobbies outside of hero work?"

Melissa buried her face in her hands with a soft groan. "Uncle Might, please..."

"I'm just saying," Toshinori said gently, his teasing tone softening into something more paternal, "he's a good young man. One of the finest I've ever had the privilege to know. If someone were to develop feelings for him, I couldn't think of anyone more deserving of those feelings."

Melissa peeked at him through her fingers. "You're not... upset? About me having a crush on one of your students?"

Toshinori's expression grew warm and sincere. "Melissa, you're both young adults, and you're not even in the same course. Besides," he added with a gentle smile, "I've seen how he looks at you too. That boy may be brilliant when it comes to analyzing Quirks, but he's absolutely hopeless when it comes to understanding his own feelings."

"Really?" Melissa asked, her hands dropping away from her face, hope flickering in her eyes.

"Really," Toshinori confirmed. "Though if you tell him I said that, I'll deny every word."

Melissa laughed, the tension finally breaking. "Your secret's safe with me, Uncle Might. But... do you really think he...?"

"I think," Toshinori said with the wisdom of someone who had watched young love bloom many times over the years, "that some things are worth taking a chance on. And I think you're both smart enough to figure it out when you're ready."

With a playful smile, he reached out and gently ruffled Melissa's hair, a gesture of affection that was as much encouragement as it was paternal teasing.

"Hey!" Melissa protested with a light laugh, playfully pushing his hand away while trying to smooth down her disheveled hair. "You're going to mess up my hair!"

Toshinori chuckled warmly, the sound carrying none of the weight that had burdened it earlier. "Sorry, sorry. Old habits."

Toshinori sighed, his eyes bright with unshed tears of gratitude. "When did our roles reverse, hmm? When did you become the one giving me life advice?"

"The moment you decided to treat me like family instead of just your friend's daughter," she replied softly. "You've been more of an uncle to me than you probably realize."

They sat in comfortable silence for a moment, the weight of shared affection settling around them like a warm blanket. The news continued to play on televisions across Japan, spreading word of the breakout to a nervous nation. But in one small living room, a restored hero and a brilliant young woman sat together, finding strength in their bond and hope in the promise of tomorrow.

"Whatever happens with Shigaraki," Melissa said finally, "you won't be facing it alone. You've got people who believe in you—Midoriya, me, Dad, all your former colleagues. That has to count for something."

Toshinori nodded, feeling more centered than he had in months. "It counts for everything," he said. "Thank you, Melissa. For everything."

As the evening wore on, they continued to talk—about her projects, his teaching, their shared memories of better times. And slowly, the shadow cast by the news of Shigaraki's escape began to recede, replaced by the warm glow of family, hope, and the unshakeable belief that even the darkest night must eventually give way to dawn.

The U.A. Faculty room hummed with the usual late-afternoon energy—a low-level buzz of grading, paperwork, and quiet conversation. The autumn sun slanted through the large windows, casting long golden rectangles across the polished floor. In one corner, Aizawa was curled up in his yellow sleeping bag like some sort of professional caterpillar, seemingly oblivious to the world but probably listening to every word being spoken. Near the center of the room, a lone coffee machine gurgled contentedly, its rhythmic brewing the closest thing to white noise the space offered.

The faculty room door opened with a soft whoosh, and Kagutsuchi entered, still dressed in his deceptively mundane janitor's uniform. His black hair, damp from a recent shower, caught the afternoon light as he moved with that peculiar grace that suggested predatory power barely contained beneath a veneer of domesticity. The scent of industrial soap and something indefinably otherworldly—like ozone before a storm—followed in his wake.

He went straight for the coffee machine, his movements economical and purposeful. The mundane task of making coffee seemed almost surreal when performed by hands that could theoretically unmake reality, but there was something oddly endearing about watching a cosmic entity navigate the complexities of caffeine acquisition. As the dark liquid poured into his mug—a plain white ceramic thing that looked ridiculously normal in his grasp—he let out a soft sigh that spoke of genuine appreciation for simple earthly pleasures.

"Long day saving the universe?" a sultry voice asked from behind him.

Kagutsuchi didn't startle—beings of his caliber didn't really do startled—but there was a subtle shift in his posture, a quickening of attention that suggested he was suddenly very aware of his surroundings. He turned slowly, golden eyes finding Nemuri Kayama as she approached with the fluid confidence of someone who had never met a room she couldn't command.

She was dressed in her professional teacher's attire rather than her hero costume—a crisp white blouse and dark pencil skirt that somehow managed to be both entirely appropriate and subtly devastating. Her dark hair was pulled back in a neat bun, though a few strategic strands had escaped to frame her face. She moved like silk given form, each step deliberate and graceful.

"More like a long day of just cleaning, repairing, the usual," Kagutsuchi replied, taking a slow sip of his coffee. His voice carried that familiar even tone, but there was something underneath it now—amusement, perhaps, or genuine curiosity about where this conversation was heading.

Nemuri leaned against the counter beside him, close enough that he could catch her perfume—something expensive and complex that seemed to shift between floral and spicy with each breath. "Oh, come now," she said, her voice dropping to that trademark purr that had made her famous. "I've seen you work. You're far too thorough to be just daunted by the job."

"Careful, Nemuri," he said, raising an eyebrow. "Compliments like that might go to my head."

"And what a head it is," she murmured, then caught herself with a laugh that was part embarrassment, part delight. "I mean—your tactical mind, of course. Very... strategic."

From his sleeping bag, Aizawa made a sound that might have been a snort of derision or possibly just a snore. It was impossible to tell with him.

Kagutsuchi's lips quirked upward in what might generously be called a smile. "Is there something you wanted, Nemuri? Or are you just here to analyze my janitorial techniques?"

She tilted her head, studying him with those sharp, intelligent eyes that had seen through countless villain schemes and student excuses. "Actually, yes. I have a proposition for you."

"Oh?" The single syllable carried a wealth of meaning—curiosity, wariness, and something that might have been anticipation.

Nemuri straightened up, squaring her shoulders like she was preparing for battle. Which, in a way, she was. "I want to take you to dinner."

The words hung in the air between them, bold and unmistakable. Across the room, Hizashi Yamada—Present Mic—looked up from his grading with eyes wide as saucers, clearly having heard every word despite his attempts to look busy. Even Aizawa's breathing seemed to pause, though his eyes remained stubbornly closed.

Kagutsuchi blinked slowly, the gesture somehow managing to convey both surprise and calculation. "Dinner," he repeated, as if testing the word.

"Yes, dinner." Nemuri's confidence was returning in force, her posture shifting back into that predatory grace that made villains confess and heroes stumble over their words. "You know—food, conversation, the revolutionary concept of two adults spending time together without the threat of imminent apocalypse hanging over their heads."

"I'm familiar with the concept," he said dryly. "I'm just surprised you're interested in... socializing... with someone most people would deem a 'cosmic horror.'"

Nemuri laughed, a sound like expensive champagne bubbling. "Oh, darling, I was interested in you even before I got the full picture of what you were. The cosmic horror thing just made it more... intriguing."

"Intriguing," he mused, taking another sip of coffee. "That's one word for it."

"I prefer 'fascinating,'" she countered, moving closer still. "When's the last time you did something purely for enjoyment, Kagutsuchi? Something that wasn't related to your duties as a Lord or your cover as a janitor?"

The question seemed to catch him off guard. His golden eyes grew distant for a moment, as if he were searching through millennia of memory for an answer. "I... honestly can't remember."

"Then you're overdue." Her voice softened, becoming less sultry seduction and more genuine warmth. "Let me show you how humans have fun. I promise it won't interfere with your divine mission or whatever cosmic schedule you're operating on."

From across the room came the distinct sound of Present Mic trying very hard not to squeal with excitement. A pencil hit the floor with a small ping as his hands apparently forgot how to hold things.

Kagutsuchi glanced in that direction, then back at Nemuri, his expression unreadable. "And what brought this on? The last time we spoke at length, you seemed convinced I was some sort of eldritch abomination planning to devour reality."

"Well," Nemuri said, her smile turning playful, "maybe I have a thing for dangerous men. Or maybe I've realized that someone who's spent eternity protecting reality from threats might just be the most heroic person I've ever met, cosmic horror aesthetic aside."

Something shifted in Kagutsuchi's expression—surprise, perhaps, or something deeper. "You think I'm heroic?"

"I think," Nemuri said, reaching out to straighten an imaginary wrinkle in his janitor's uniform, her fingers barely brushing the fabric, "that you're the most interesting person to walk into my life in years. And I think you could use someone to remind you what you're protecting."

The touch was brief, barely there, but Kagutsuchi went very still. When he spoke again, his voice was quieter, more thoughtful. "I'd be terrible company. I'm not exactly known for sparkling conversation."

"Lucky for you," Nemuri said, her confidence returning in full force, "I have enough conversation for both of us. Though I suspect you're selling yourself short." She leaned back against the counter, crossing her arms in a way that was both casual and deliberately eye-catching. "Besides, I'm curious to see what the real you is like when you're not playing either divine enforcer or humble janitor."

"The real me," he repeated, as if the concept were foreign.

"Mmm." She nodded. "I have a theory that underneath all that stoic, otherworldly composure, you're actually quite charming. Consider dinner an opportunity to prove me right... or wrong."

Kagutsuchi studied her for a long moment, his golden eyes seeming to look right through her and somehow finding whatever he was searching for. "You're not going to let this go, are you?"

"Not a chance." Her smile was brilliant and absolutely unrepentant. "I'm very persistent when I want something."

"And you want... this?"

"I want to have dinner with you, yes. I want to see you smile without it being because you're about to lecture someone about cosmic balance. I want to hear you laugh—actual laughter, not that dry chuckle you do when you think humans are being amusing." Her voice grew more earnest. "I want to spend time with Kagutsuchi the person, not Kagutsuchi the Lord or Kagutsuchi the janitor."

From his sleeping bag, Aizawa finally spoke up without opening his eyes: "Just say yes so she'll stop making bedroom eyes at you. Some of us are trying to sleep."

"They're not bedroom eyes!" Nemuri protested, though her blush suggested otherwise.

"They absolutely are," Present Mic chimed in helpfully, apparently having given up all pretense of not eavesdropping. "Not that I'm complaining! This is the most exciting thing to happen in the faculty room since... well, ever!"

Kagutsuchi looked around the room—at Aizawa's determinedly closed eyes, at Present Mic's barely contained excitement, at the afternoon sunlight streaming through the windows—and something in his expression softened. When his gaze returned to Nemuri, there was something almost fond in it.

"Fine," he said finally, and the word carried the weight of decision. "But I choose the place."

Nemuri's face lit up like she'd just won the lottery. "Really?"

"I know a place," he continued, ignoring Present Mic's muffled squeal of delight. "Serves excellent sushi, has a view of the city skyline. It's... appropriate for someone of your tastes."

"How do you know my tastes?" she asked, tilting her head with renewed curiosity.

His smile this time was genuinely amused. "Nemuri, I've been watching this school for months. I know you prefer expensive restaurants, you have a weakness for good wine, and you judge establishments by their ambiance as much as their food."

"Have you been profiling me?" The question was half accusation, half flirtation.

"I profile everyone," he said matter-of-factly. "It's habit. Though in your case..." He paused, taking another sip of coffee. "I may have paid more attention than strictly necessary."

The admission hung between them, loaded with implications neither of them seemed quite ready to unpack.

"Seven-thirty?" Nemuri asked, her voice carefully casual despite the triumph dancing in her eyes.

"Seven-thirty," he confirmed. "Don't be late."

"Wouldn't dream of it." She pushed off from the counter, smoothing down her skirt with hands that were perfectly steady despite the slightly giddy smile on her face. "Should I dress for cosmic warfare, or is this a normal restaurant?"

"Dress however you want," Kagutsuchi said, his tone returning to that familiar even cadence. "Though... maybe avoid anything too delicate. You never know when duty might call."

Nemuri's smile turned absolutely wicked. "Is that a promise or a threat?"

"With me," he said, finishing his coffee and setting the mug down with deliberate care, "there's often very little difference."

And with that deliciously ominous parting line, he nodded politely to the room at large and headed for the door, leaving behind the lingering scent of ozone and the sound of Present Mic finally giving in to his excited squealing.

"Oh my God, oh my God, you have a date!" Hizashi practically bounced in his chair. "With the cosmic janitor! This is the best day ever!"

"It's just dinner," Nemuri said primly, though she couldn't quite hide her smile.

"That was not 'just dinner' energy," Aizawa observed from his sleeping bag. "That was 'I'm going to seduce an ancient cosmic entity' energy."

"I don't seduce," Nemuri protested. "I charm."

"Same difference," Present Mic sing-songed. "Oh, this is going to be so good! Do you think he'll show up in the janitor uniform? Or does he have more than that suit and coat he always rocks? What does a Lord wear to dinner? Is there cosmic formal wear?"

"Hizashi," Nemuri said sweetly, "if you don't stop, I'm going to use my Quirk to make sure you sleep through your next three radio shows."

But she was smiling as she said it, already mentally cataloging her wardrobe and wondering what exactly one wore to dinner with eternity incarnate.

This was either going to be the best date of her life, or the most memorable way she'd ever died.

Possibly both.

The private training grounds were a world apart from the bustling energy of the main U.A. facilities. This secluded section, walled off by tall concrete barriers and shaded by ancient oak trees, felt almost sacred in its quietude. The only sounds were the gentle whisper of wind through leaves and the distant chirping of birds going about their evening routines. Here, away from prying eyes and the pressure of performance, real growth could happen.

Izuku Midoriya stood in the center of the grassy clearing, his Agito armor shimmering faintly beneath his training clothes like captured starlight. The golden energy that had once blazed around him like a solar flare now pulsed with controlled rhythm, steady as a heartbeat. He had learned to make his power breathe with him, to flow rather than rage. Every movement he made was economical and deliberate, the result of months of hard-won mastery over forces that could level city blocks.

Twenty feet away, Yuga Aoyama sat cross-legged on the grass, and he looked nothing like the dazzling prince who had once commanded every room he entered. His blonde hair, grown longer during his confinement, fell in unruly waves around his face instead of its usual perfect styling. The designer clothes and carefully cultivated aesthetic were gone, replaced by a simple U.A. training uniform that hung loosely on his frame. But it was his eyes that showed the greatest change—where once they had sparkled with confident vanity, now they held something deeper, more fragile. The weight of vulnerability.

"Focus on your breathing, Aoyama-kun," Izuku said softly, his voice carrying the patient tone of someone who understood struggle intimately. "Feel the energy, but don't try to control it. Just... let it exist with you."

Aoyama's hands trembled slightly where they rested on his knees. Behind his closed eyelids, a war was raging—the chaotic, golden storm of his newfound Agito power clashing against the phantom pain where his Navel Laser used to be. The absence of his original Quirk felt like a missing limb, a constant ache that made everything else feel wrong.

"It's like trying to breathe underwater," Aoyama whispered, his usual dramatic flair replaced by raw honesty. "This power... it doesn't feel like mine, Midoriya-kun. It feels like I'm wearing someone else's skin."

Izuku moved closer, settling down on the grass beside his classmate. The proximity of another Agito seemed to calm the turbulent energy around them both, like two tuning forks finding harmony. "I know," he said simply. "When I first awakened, I felt like I was drowning in my own power. Like it was going to tear me apart from the inside."

"But you made it look so easy," Aoyama said, opening his eyes to look at Izuku with something approaching desperation. "At the Sports Festival, when you first showed your armor... you were magnificent. Golden and perfect and heroic. Everything I always pretended to be."

Izuku was quiet for a moment, considering his words carefully. "You know I told you before about why I really wanted to be a hero, right? How it started from wanting to be seen, to matter, to not be treated like I was worthless?"

Aoyama nodded, remembering their previous conversation. "You said it was selfish at first."

"It was," Izuku confirmed without shame. "And you know what? I'm done apologizing for that. Everyone deserves to be valued. Everyone deserves to matter. There's nothing wrong with wanting those things." His voice grew stronger, more resolute. "What I've learned is that I can take those feelings—that need to be seen and appreciated—and use them to fuel something better."

He gestured to the golden energy flowing around them both. "Every time I help someone now, every time I use this power to protect people, I'm proving to that Quirkless kid I used to be that he was worth something. That all those people who dismissed him were wrong. And you know what? That feels good. It's supposed to feel good."

Aoyama watched him with growing understanding as Izuku continued.

"I want people to see me succeed. I want to be admired and respected and loved. But now I earn those things by actually helping people, by being the hero I always dreamed of being." Izuku's smile was genuine, free of the guilt that had once clouded it. "My motivation isn't pure altruism, and I'm okay with that. It's human. It's real. And it works."

"So you're saying..." Aoyama began slowly.

"I'm saying that wanting to be special isn't a character flaw, Aoyama-kun. It's what you do with that want that defines you." Izuku looked directly at him. "You got caught up in a performance, but underneath all that, you still have the same desire to matter, to be valued. We just need to help you find a way to channel that into something real."

Aoyama felt something shift inside him—not the golden energy of his power, but something deeper. A kind of permission he hadn't realized he'd been waiting for. "I... I want to try again. To be someone worth admiring, but genuinely this time."

"Then let's work on it together," Izuku said with a warm smile. "No more shame about wanting to shine. Let's just find the right way to do it."

For several minutes, they worked together in companionable silence, two Agito finding their balance in the fading light of evening. Aoyama gradually learned to breathe with his power instead of against it, letting the golden energy flow around him like gentle candlelight rather than trying to force it into submission.

"I think I'm getting it," Aoyama whispered finally, a small, genuine smile gracing his lips for the first time in days. The golden light around him had settled into a soft, elegant glow—different from Izuku's bold radiance, but beautiful in its own way.

"You are," Izuku confirmed, his own smile warm with pride. "You're doing great, Aoyama-kun."

They sat quietly for a while longer, both exhausted but satisfied with the progress. As the sun began to set, painting the sky in shades of gold and pink, Aoyama finally spoke up again.

"Midoriya-kun," he said, his voice carrying a hint of his old theatrical curiosity, "I've been wondering... during the Sports Festival, when you debuted your Agito form, it was so bright and majestic and heroic. What did my armor look like when I transformed?"

The question hung in the air like a loaded bomb. Izuku's face went through several rapid expressions—surprise, panic, calculation, and finally a kind of desperate creativity that suggested he was about to attempt the conversational equivalent of defusing an explosive device with kitchen utensils.

"Well," Izuku started, his voice taking on a distinctly strained quality, "it was... very... distinctive."

"Distinctive how?" Aoyama pressed, his eyes lighting up with hope. "Was it as golden and magnificent as yours? Did it sparkle? Please tell me it sparkled."

Izuku's mind raced frantically through his memories of Aoyama's transformed state—the massive, insectoid horror with glowing red eyes, razor-sharp mandibles, and an overall aesthetic that belonged in a nightmare rather than a superhero story. How exactly did one break it to someone that their magical transformation made them look like something that would crawl out of a horror movie to devour small children?

"It was... very... memorable," Izuku managed, his smile becoming increasingly strained. "Very... imposing. Very... uh... it had a really strong presence."

"Strong presence!" Aoyama latched onto this immediately, his face brightening. "That sounds wonderful! But what did it actually look like? The color? The design? Was it elegant?"

"Well..." Izuku's voice cracked slightly. "It was definitely... dark. Very dark. Like, really dark. Really, really dark."

Aoyama's face began to fall. "Dark? Not golden?"

"No, not... not golden exactly. More like... shadow-themed? Very mysterious! Very... um..." Izuku was flailing now, his hands gesturing wildly as if he could physically pull the right words from the air. "It was like a... a really cool... anti-hero aesthetic? Like those dark, brooding characters in tokusatsu shows who are actually good guys but look intimidating?"

"Anti-hero?" Aoyama's voice was small, uncertain.

"Yeah! Like... like Batman! Batman is dark and scary-looking, but he's still a hero! Or... or like those really cool dark knights in fantasy stories! Very powerful and mysterious and..." Izuku was really reaching now, sweat beginning to bead on his forehead. "Very... arthropod-inspired?"

"Arthropod?" Aoyama blinked in confusion.

"You know, like... insects are really cool! They're efficient and powerful and... and some of them are really beautiful in their own way! Like beetles! Beetles can be very shiny and impressive!" Izuku was speaking faster now, as if speed could somehow make his explanation more convincing.

"Midoriya-kun," Aoyama said slowly, "are you telling me I looked like a bug?"

The question hung in the air like a guillotine blade. Izuku's mouth opened and closed several times, producing no sound except a faint squeaking noise.

"Not just any bug!" he finally burst out desperately. "A really cool bug! A very intimidating, powerful bug! Like... like a warrior bug! A heroic bug!"

Aoyama stared at him for a long moment, his expression unreadable. Then, to Izuku's complete shock, he started to laugh.

"Oh mon dieu," Aoyama gasped between giggles, "you should see your face right now! You look like you're about to have a panic attack!"

"I... but... you're not upset?" Izuku asked, bewildered.

"Upset? Midoriya-kun, I spent months as a living lie, betraying everyone I cared about while pretending to be something I'm not. After all that, you think I'm going to be devastated because my transformation looks like a fancy insect instead of a shining prince?" Aoyama wiped tears of laughter from his eyes. "Besides, some insects are quite beautiful. And you said it was imposing, non?"

"Very imposing," Izuku confirmed weakly, still not quite believing he wasn't about to get dramatically wailed at.

"Then perhaps," Aoyama said with a genuine smile, "it's exactly what I need. No more pretending to be a sparkling prince. If I'm going to be a hero, maybe it's better to look like something real and powerful rather than something pretty and fake."

Izuku felt a wave of relief so strong it nearly knocked him over. "Really?"

"Really. Though..." Aoyama's smile turned slightly mischievous. "Next time someone asks you to describe something gently, perhaps work on your delivery. You looked like you were about to spontaneously combust."

"I was!" Izuku laughed, the tension finally breaking. "I had no idea how to tell you that your armor looks like it crawled out of a kaiju movie!"

"A kaiju bug," Aoyama mused thoughtfully. "You know what? I think I can work with that."

As they walked back toward the main campus, both of them laughing about Izuku's spectacular failure at diplomatic description, the golden light of their shared power faded into the gathering dusk. But the bond between them remained—stronger than fear, deeper than power, and apparently durable enough to survive even the most tactless armor critiques in U.A. history.

"Same time tomorrow?" Aoyama asked as they reached the dormitory entrance.

"Same time tomorrow," Izuku confirmed. "And next time, I'll just show you pictures."

"That," Aoyama said with a grin, "might be significantly more honest than your descriptive skills."

The atmosphere in Classroom 1-A was a chaotic mix of excitement and nervous energy. The room was filled with the usual late-afternoon sunlight, but today, it felt different. Nemuri Kayama, or Midnight as she was known in her hero persona, stood at the front of the class, a playful smirk on her face.

"Alright, everyone! Let's get this show on the road!" she announced, her voice as sultry as her hero costume. "Today, you will officially be taking the first step on your path to becoming a Pro Hero. Today, you will choose your hero names!"

The students buzzed with anticipation, some frantically scribbling on their whiteboards while others sat frozen with indecision. Midnight's eyes gleamed as she surveyed the room. "Remember, these names will follow you throughout your entire career. Choose wisely! Now, who wants to go first?"

Several hands shot up immediately, but it was Mina Ashido who bounded to the front of the class, her pink skin practically glowing with excitement.

"Me first! Me first!" she called out, clutching her whiteboard to her chest dramatically before spinning it around with a flourish. In bold, bubbly letters, she had written: PINKY.

"I want to be called Pinky!" she announced with jazz hands. "It's cute, it's memorable, and it totally fits my acidic personality!"

Midnight nodded approvingly. "Simple, effective, and it suits your Quirk perfectly. Well done, Ashido!"

Mina practically skipped back to her seat as Eijiro Kirishima jumped up next, his shark-toothed grin wider than usual.

"Alright, my turn!" He held up his board confidently: RED RIOT.

"Red Riot!" he declared, pumping his fist. "It's a tribute to the Chivalrous Hero, Crimson Riot! He's been my inspiration since I was a kid, and I want to carry on his legacy of never backing down!"

The class erupted in approving cheers. "That's so manly, Kirishima!" Kaminari shouted.

"Red Riot it is," Midnight said with a warm smile. "A name with history and heart. Excellent choice."

Tsuyu Asui hopped up next, her expression as calm and collected as always. She turned her board around to reveal: FROPPY.

"I'd like to be called Froppy," she said matter-of-factly. "My friends and family have always called me that, and it feels natural. Plus, it's approachable – I want people to feel comfortable coming to me for help."

"Ribbit-ing choice!" Midnight said with a wink, causing several students to groan at the pun. "Froppy has a friendly, heroic ring to it."

Tenya Iida stood up with military precision, his board held at the perfect angle: INGENIUM.

"I will be taking the name Ingenium," he announced solemnly. "It was my brother's hero name, and though he can no longer be a hero due to his injuries, I wish to carry on the legacy he built. I will strive to be worthy of the name he made great."

The classroom fell silent for a moment, touched by the weight of Iida's decision. Midnight's usual playful demeanor softened. "That's a beautiful tribute, Iida. I'm sure your brother would be proud."

Denki Kaminari practically vibrated with excitement as he rushed to the front. "Okay, okay, check this out!" He revealed his board: CHARGEBOLT.

"Chargebolt! Get it? Like, I charge up and then – bolt! Lightning bolt! It's electric!" He wiggled his fingers, small sparks dancing between them.

"Energetic and punny," Midnight chuckled. "It definitely captures your... spark."

Ochaco Uraraka floated slightly as she walked to the front, her cheeks pink with nervousness. She turned her board around shyly: URAVITY.

"Um, Uravity," she said softly. "It combines my name with gravity, and it sounds kind of like 'prosperity,' which... well, I want to help my parents and make money as a hero, but I also want to help people prosper and succeed too!"

"Wonderful!" Midnight clapped. "It's clever, personal, and has multiple layers of meaning. Very sophisticated!"

Fumikage Tokoyami stepped forward with his usual gothic composure, his board reading: TSUKUYOMI.

"I shall be known as Tsukuyomi," he intoned dramatically. "Named for the Shinto god of the moon, it reflects both my connection to darkness and the divine nature of my shadow."

"Ah, a name steeped in mythology and mystery," Midnight purred. "It suits your aesthetic perfectly, Tokoyami."

Mashirao Ojiro approached more hesitantly, clearly having put a lot of thought into his choice: TAILMAN.

"I'm going with Tailman," he said simply. "It's straightforward, describes my Quirk, and doesn't try to be something it's not. I want to be a hero people can rely on, someone dependable and honest."

"Sometimes the most honest approach is the best approach," Midnight nodded approvingly. "Tailman has a classic, reliable feel to it."

Rikido Sato stepped up with a shy smile: SUGARMAN.

"Sugarman," he announced. "My Quirk runs on sugar, and... well, I want to be someone who makes people's lives a little sweeter, you know?"

"Aww, that's actually really sweet!" Mina called out, causing Sato to blush even more.

"Indeed it is," Midnight agreed. "A name that's both descriptive and endearing."

Mezo Shoji moved to the front with his usual quiet dignity: TENTACOLE.

"Tentacole," he said in his deep, measured voice. "It reflects my Quirk's nature while maintaining a heroic sound. I want to be someone who can reach out and help people in any situation."

"Strong and versatile, just like your Quirk," Midnight nodded. "Tentacole has good hero presence."

Kyoka Jiro walked up, twirling her earphone jack nervously: EARPHONE JACK.

"Earphone Jack," she said with a slight shrug. "It's what my Quirk is, and honestly, I couldn't think of anything that didn't sound cheesy. Sometimes simple is better."

"A pragmatic approach," Midnight smiled. "And it has a nice, modern superhero feel to it."

Hanta Sero bounded up with characteristic enthusiasm: CELLOPHANE.

"Cellophane! Like the tape, but also kind of mysterious and see-through, you know? Plus it sounds way cooler than just 'Tape Guy' or something."

"Creative and catchy," Midnight approved. "It definitely has more flair than the obvious choices."

Koji Koda approached nervously, his large frame somehow managing to look small as he held up his board: ANIMA.

"A-Anima," he whispered, barely audible. "It means... um... soul, or life force. Since I can talk to animals, I thought... their spirits..."

"Speak up, Koda!" Midnight encouraged gently. "Anima is a beautiful choice – it shows the deep connection you have with living creatures."

Toru Hagakure's uniform seemed to dance as she moved to the front, her board floating mysteriously: INVISIBLE GIRL.

"I'm going with Invisible Girl!" her cheerful voice announced from seemingly empty air. "I know it's obvious, but it's also kind of fun and mysterious! Plus, people will definitely remember it!"

"Sometimes the obvious choice is obvious for a reason," Midnight laughed. "And you're right – it's definitely memorable!"

Minoru Mineta swaggered up with uncharacteristic confidence: GRAPE JUICE.

"Grape Juice!" he declared. "It's smooth, it's sophisticated, and it references my Quirk! Plus, all the ladies love grape juice, right?"

The class collectively cringed, and Midnight's eye twitched slightly. "Well... it's certainly... unique, Mineta. Moving on!"

Momo Yaoyorozu approached with her usual grace and poise: CREATI.

"I've chosen Creati," she said elegantly. "It represents my Quirk's creative potential and my desire to create a better world through heroism. It's also easy to remember and has international appeal."

"Sophisticated and globally minded," Midnight nodded approvingly. "A name befitting someone of your capabilities, Yaoyorozu."

Finally, Shoto Todoroki walked to the front, his expression unreadable as always. He held up his board: SHOTO.

"Just... Shoto," he said quietly. "It's my name. I've decided I want to become a hero as myself, not as my father's son or as someone else's expectation. Just me."

The classroom fell silent, understanding the weight behind his simple choice. After everything with his family, choosing to be simply himself was perhaps the bravest decision of all.

Midnight's smile was genuinely warm. "Sometimes the most powerful statement is the simplest one. Shoto it is."

As the last student returned to his seat, Midnight surveyed the room with satisfaction. "Excellent work, everyone! You've all chosen names that reflect not just your Quirks, but your personalities and aspirations as heroes. These names will be your first step toward—"

She paused, noticing two students who hadn't presented yet.

Finally, it was Izuku Midoriya's turn. He walked to the podium, a blank whiteboard in hand. He stood there for a moment, his gaze fixed on the empty space, a conflicted look on his face.

"Midoriya-kun?" Nemuri asked, her tone gentle. "Do you have your hero name ready?"

Izuku shook his head slowly. "I... I'm not sure," he admitted, his voice quiet.

"What?" piped up Mina Ashido from her desk. "But you're so cool! Shouldn't your name be 'Agito'?"

"Yeah!" chimed in Denki Kaminari. "It's the name of your awesome power, right? It's perfect!"

Izuku shook his head again, a small, sad smile on his face. "Thank you, everyone," he said. "But Agito isn't a name. It's... what the power is called. It's not me."

A low murmur of confusion rippled through the class. Izuku's reasoning made sense, but they still seemed at a loss for a better name. The classroom door opened quietly, and all eyes turned to see Kagutsuchi, still in his janitor's uniform, leaning against the door frame. His golden eyes scanned the room before settling on Izuku. His deep, even voice cut through the quiet. "Well, what do we have here?"

"Kagutsuchi-san?" Mina voiced out.

Kagutsuchi, with that ever-enigmatic smile playing across his lips, asked, "Heard some of the commotion outside. All this over hero names?"

"Yes!" shouted Kirishima, pumping his fist. "This is the most important part! Hero names are half the fun of being a hero!"

Kagutsuchi let out a low chuckle. "And half the marketing, once you're in the pro leagues." He looked over at Izuku with a pointed expression. "Maybe I can help you out, kid."

Ochaco, ever the curious one, tilted her head. "Do you have a suggestion, sir?"

The classroom had fallen into that particular kind of silence that only came when students sensed they were about to hear something important. Kagutsuchi stood in the doorway, his golden eyes sweeping across the room before settling on Izuku, who still held his marker uncertainly at the whiteboard.

"Kamen Rider Agito," Kagutsuchi said, his voice carrying that same even tone he always used, but there was something different underneath it now—something that might have been reverence.

The class exchanged confused glances. "Kamen... what?" Denki asked, scratching his head. "Why that name? It sounds so... formal."

Kagutsuchi stepped fully into the room, his presence somehow making the space feel smaller and more intimate. When he spoke again, his voice took on the cadence of someone telling a story that mattered.

"That name once belonged to a legendary Agito," he began, his gaze distant as if he were looking back through time itself. "His name was Shoichi Tsugami. In the year 2001, he was an anomaly—even among the Agito. He was, in many ways, very much like you, Izuku."

Momo leaned forward in her seat, her analytical mind immediately latching onto the implications. "What made him an anomaly, Kagutsuchi-san?"

A ghost of a smile crossed Kagutsuchi's features—not his usual enigmatic expression, but something softer, tinged with what might have been nostalgia. "He was an amnesiac. A complete blank slate, you might say. The awakening of his Agito power had torn away everything he once was, leaving him with no memory of his past, his family, or even his own name."

The weight of those words settled over the classroom like a heavy blanket. Several students shifted uncomfortably in their seats, trying to imagine waking up with no knowledge of who they were.

"How terrible," Tsuyu said quietly, her large eyes reflecting genuine sympathy. "What happened to him? How did he lose his memory?"

Kagutsuchi's expression grew more serious, his golden eyes reflecting something that looked almost like old pain. "He was on a ferry with his sister—a pleasure cruise that was supposed to be a simple family vacation. But the Lords found them." His voice dropped lower, becoming almost conversational, as if he were sharing a confidence. "The ship came under attack. In the chaos of that night, Shoichi's Agito power awakened for the first time."

"Did he save everyone?" Kirishima asked eagerly, his hero instincts immediately focusing on the rescue aspect.

"He tried," Kagutsuchi replied, and there was something in his tone that suggested the story didn't have the happy ending Kirishima was hoping for. "But Agito power, especially during an initial awakening, is... volatile. Uncontrolled. The psychic shock of the transformation, combined with the trauma of the attack, shattered his mind completely. When rescue teams found him floating in the wreckage hours later, he couldn't even remember his own name."

The silence that followed was profound. Even Bakugo, who rarely showed interest in anything that didn't directly involve combat, was listening intently.

"What about his sister?" Ochaco asked softly, though something in her voice suggested she already feared the answer.

Kagutsuchi's face became a mask of grim professionalism, all warmth draining from his expression. His golden eyes went cold and distant, and when he spoke, his voice was clinical, detached. "She was also a latent Agito. But where Shoichi's power stabilized, hers... did not."

He paused, and in that silence, the class could practically feel the weight of tragedy approaching.

"The awakening drove her mad," he continued, his words precise and unforgiving. "The power was too much for her mind to process. She experienced constant, excruciating pain as her body tried to transform but couldn't complete the process. Hallucinations. Violent mood swings. She became a danger to herself and everyone around her."

Mina's hand flew to her mouth. "Oh no..."

"She lasted three weeks after the rescue," Kagutsuchi said with brutal honesty. "Three weeks of agony that no medication could touch, no therapy could reach. In the end, she..." He stopped, his jaw tightening almost imperceptibly. "She chose to end her suffering herself rather than risk hurting the people trying to help her."

The words fell like stones into still water, creating ripples of shock and horror throughout the classroom. Several students looked physically ill. Izuku's face had gone pale, his hand gripping the marker so tightly his knuckles were white.

"That's horrible," Iida said, his voice thick with emotion. "That poor girl... and her brother, having to live with that..."

"The worst part," Kagutsuchi continued relentlessly, "was that Shoichi never remembered her. Even when they told him about his sister, about what had happened, it was like hearing about strangers. The mind that had loved her, that had shared a lifetime of memories with her, was gone forever."

Tsuyu's voice was barely a whisper when she asked, "Did he ever get his memory back?"

Something shifted in Kagutsuchi's expression—not quite warmth, but a softening around the edges. "No, he never did. But perhaps that was a mercy. Instead of dwelling on a past he couldn't recall, he found something else. Something better, perhaps."

"What do you mean?" Todoroki asked, speaking for the first time since the story began.

"He was taken in by a doctor—an older man named Ryō Ashihara who specialized in treating trauma victims. What started as a medical case became something more. Ashihara became his guardian, his teacher, his father in all the ways that mattered." Kagutsuchi's voice grew warmer as he continued. "Shoichi learned to live in the present. He built new relationships, found new purposes. He discovered that sometimes, losing everything can be the first step toward finding who you're truly meant to be."

"But what about his power?" Izuku asked quietly. "How did he control it without any training or memory of what he was?"

Kagutsuchi's smile returned, genuine and almost proud. "That's what made him legendary. Most Agito struggle with their power because they're fighting against it, trying to impose their will upon it. But Shoichi had no preconceptions, no fear-based limitations. To him, the power wasn't something foreign—it was simply part of who he was. He approached it with the innocence of someone who didn't know it was supposed to be difficult."

"So he just... figured it out?" Kaminari asked incredulously.

"More than that," Kagutsuchi said, his eyes taking on that distant look again. "He mastered it in ways that other Agito never could. His forms were more stable, his transformations smoother. He fought with an instinctive grace that came from complete acceptance of what he was."

"Did he ever fight Lords?" Kirishima asked, completely enthralled now.

"Oh yes," Kagutsuchi confirmed, and now his smile held a edge of something that might have been respect. "Many Lords. Including myself, on more than one occasion."

The classroom erupted in surprised murmurs. "You fought him?" Sero asked, his eyes wide.

"Several times," Kagutsuchi said matter-of-factly. "It was my duty. An Agito of his power level couldn't be ignored, regardless of how... benevolent... his intentions seemed. The first time we fought, I expected it to be over quickly. After all, what could an amnesiac human do against a Lord?"

He chuckled, a sound that held genuine amusement and perhaps a touch of embarrassment. "He lasted fourteen minutes. The second time, twenty-three. By our fourth encounter, I was beginning to suspect that eliminating him might not be as straightforward as I'd initially assumed."

"He got stronger each time?" Yaoyorozu asked, her tactical mind clearly working through the implications.

"Stronger, faster, more creative," Kagutsuchi confirmed. "But more than that, he was... persistent. No matter how badly I injured him, no matter how hopeless the situation seemed, he kept getting back up. He had this infuriating habit of turning what should have been his final moments into opportunities for growth."

"That's so manly!" Kirishima practically shouted, his eyes shining with admiration.

"It was... educational," Kagutsuchi admitted. "I began to understand that there was something different about this particular Agito. Something that defied the usual classifications."

"What happened to him in the end?" Tsuyu asked. "Did you ever... did he..."

"Die?" Kagutsuchi finished. "Eventually, yes. But not by my hand, or any Lord's hand. He lived a full life—fought when he needed to fight, protected those who needed protection, loved and was loved in return. When his time came, it was age that claimed him, not violence."

A collective sigh of relief went through the classroom.

"But that's not the most remarkable part," Kagutsuchi continued, his voice dropping to something almost reverent. "Do you know what happens when an Agito reaches the pinnacle of their power? When they've grown beyond the limitations of human flesh?"

The students shook their heads, hanging on his every word.

"They ascend," he said simply. "They become something beyond mortal existence. Divine, eternal, unstoppable. It's the ultimate evolution of Agito power—to transcend humanity entirely."

"And Shoichi could have done that?" Midoriya asked, his voice barely audible.

"Could have? He did. For a brief moment, at the very end of his final battle, he achieved that transcendent state. I felt it happen—every Lord did. The birth of a new god, a being of pure Agito essence." Kagutsuchi's eyes were distant now, lost in memory. "For one shining instant, Shoichi Tsugami held divinity in his hands."

"So what happened?" Ashido whispered. "Did he become a god?"

Kagutsuchi's smile was soft, almost fond. "He let it go."

The words hung in the air like a benediction.

"He chose," Kagutsuchi continued, "to release that power. To step down from godhood and return to his human form. In that moment, he could have become immortal, could have reshaped reality itself. Instead, he chose to remain Shoichi Tsugami—flawed, mortal, human."

"But why?" Iida asked, clearly struggling to understand. "Why would anyone give up that kind of power?"

"Because," Kagutsuchi said, his golden eyes finding Izuku's, "he understood something that most Agito never learn. Power without humanity is just destruction waiting to happen. He chose to stay connected to the people he loved, to the world he'd sworn to protect. He chose to be a guardian, not a god."

The classroom was silent, every student processing the weight of that choice.

"That," Kagutsuchi said finally, "is what made him a legend. Not his strength, not his victories, but his choice to remain human when he could have been so much more. That is the legacy of the name 'Kamen Rider Agito'—the courage to face impossible odds, and the wisdom to know when enough is enough."

He looked directly at Izuku, his expression serious but not unkind. "It's a heavy name to carry, Izuku. Are you prepared for that weight?"

Izuku looked down at the marker in his hand, then up at the blank whiteboard, and finally at the faces of his classmates—his friends—who were all watching him with expressions of support and encouragement.

When he finally spoke, his voice was quiet but steady. "I think... I think I'd like to try to be worthy of it."

And in that moment, something passed between the ancient Lord and the young Agito—an understanding, perhaps, or maybe just the acknowledgment that some legacies were worth preserving.

Suddenly, Aoyama rose from his seat, a hand held high in the air with dramatic flourish. "I, too, am an Agito!" he proclaimed, his voice carrying hints of his old theatrical flair despite everything he'd been through. "Does that mean we should share the name, Midoriya-kun? We could be partners in battle! A dazzling duo of—"

"Gills," Kagutsuchi interrupted, the single word cutting through Aoyama's grandiose declaration like a blade.

The classroom fell into complete silence. Every head turned toward the janitor, then back to Aoyama, whose dramatic pose slowly wilted as the word sank in.

"I... beg your pardon?" Aoyama asked, his voice small and uncertain, all trace of his usual confidence evaporating.

Kagutsuchi's golden eyes glinted with what might have been amusement as he stood just inside the classroom, near the door. "Gills. That's what happens when an Agito's power becomes... unstable. When the transformation goes wrong." He gestured casually toward Aoyama. "Your situation, specifically."

Aoyama's face went through several expressions in rapid succession—confusion, dawning horror, and finally, complete mortification. "Gills?" he repeated weakly. "As in... fish... gills?"

"Afraid so," Kagutsuchi replied with that enigmatic smile playing at his lips. "But if you don't want to share Izuku's name, you could always be Kamen Rider Gills. Has a certain... flare to it."

The silence stretched on for what felt like an eternity. Aoyama looked like he wanted to sink through the floor and disappear forever. This was not the magnificent, shining hero name he had envisioned. This was... aquatic. Rough. Decidedly un-fabulous.

Then Kirishima suddenly shot up from his seat, his face lit up with genuine enthusiasm. "Dude, that's AWESOME!" he shouted, pumping his fist in the air. "Kamen Rider Gills! It sounds so intense! So manly!"

Aoyama blinked at him, clearly not following Kirishima's logic. "Manly?" he echoed faintly.

"Yeah!" Kaminari chimed in, warming to the idea. "It's got this really cool, dangerous vibe to it! Like, you don't want to mess with someone called Gills, you know? It sounds like it bites!"

"And it's unique!" Mina added, bouncing in her seat. "Nobody else has a name like that! It's mysterious and edgy!"

Aoyama looked around at his classmates' increasingly excited faces, his own expression a mixture of bewilderment and cautious hope. "But... it's not very... sparkling?"

"Who needs sparkling when you've got intimidation factor?" Sero called out with a grin. "Gills sounds like a name that gets respect!"

"Plus," Jiro added with a smirk, "it's way cooler than 'Can't Stop Twinkling.'"

A few students snickered at that, and even Aoyama's lips twitched slightly upward.

Tsuyu, ever practical, tilted her head thoughtfully. "It does have a nice sound to it, kero. Strong and simple."

"Simple?" Aoyama asked, still sounding uncertain but less devastated than before.

"Sometimes the best names are simple," Iida said, adjusting his glasses in his typical serious manner. "They're easier to remember and have more impact. 'Gills' is certainly memorable."

Yaoyorozu nodded in agreement. "There's something to be said for a name that's distinctive. It would certainly stand out among hero rankings."

Slowly, gradually, Aoyama began to straighten up. The initial shock was wearing off, replaced by something that might have been cautious optimism. "You... you really think it sounds good?"

"Are you kidding?" Kirishima exclaimed. "It sounds totally badass! Way cooler than 'Red Riot' when you think about it!"

"Hey!" several students protested in mock offense, but they were all smiling.

Aoyama looked over at Izuku, who had been watching the exchange with growing warmth. "What do you think, Midoriya-kun? Honestly?"

Izuku considered for a moment, then smiled broadly. "I think it suits you perfectly, Aoyama-kun. It's strong, it's memorable, and it's yours. Plus," he added with a slight grin, "we'd make a pretty formidable team—Agito and Gills."

"Partners in battle?" Aoyama asked, a hint of his old theatrical flair creeping back into his voice.

"Partners in battle," Izuku confirmed.

Aoyama stood up a little straighter, testing the name on his tongue. "Kamen Rider Gills..." He paused, then said it again with more confidence. "Kamen Rider Gills." A slow smile spread across his face. "It does have a certain... fierce elegance, doesn't it?"

"There you go!" Kaminari cheered. "Fierce elegance! That's totally you, man!"

"And it's way more mysterious than anything sparkly," Hagakure added. "Mystery is very cool!"

Aoyama's smile grew wider, and for the first time since suggesting the name, he looked genuinely pleased. "Fierce, mysterious, elegant..." He struck a small pose. "Yes, I think I can work with this."

The class erupted in supportive cheers and applause, their enthusiasm infectious and genuine. Even students who hadn't spoken up were nodding approvingly or giving thumbs up.

Izuku, caught up in the moment and feeling a renewed sense of purpose, turned back to his whiteboard. With steady, confident strokes, he wrote in bold letters:

THE ARMORED HERO: KAMEN RIDER AGITO

Another burst of applause filled the room as his classmates saw his chosen name displayed proudly for all to see.

Kagutsuchi watched the whole exchange with that knowing smile, his arms crossed as he observed how quickly the class had rallied around their classmate. When the excitement finally died down, he spoke again.

"Well then," he said, straightening up slightly. "Looks like that's settled. Kamen Rider Agito and Kamen Rider Gills." His golden eyes found Nemuri's across the room. "Speaking of partnerships..."

But the students were too caught up in their excitement over the new hero names to pay much attention to whatever cryptic comment their mysterious janitor was making now. Aoyama was beaming, Izuku looked proud and determined, and the rest of Class 1-A was already planning how cool their team attacks would look.

What had started as a moment of potential humiliation had transformed into something beautiful—a reminder that sometimes the best names, like the best friendships, are the ones you never expected to want but can't imagine living without.

After the hero names were settled, Kagutsuchi straightened up, dusting off his janitor's uniform with exaggerated care. "Well, now that we've got everyone sorted with their heroic identities..." His golden eyes found Nemuri's across the room, and his usual stoic expression melted into something dangerously charming. "I do believe I have a prior engagement this evening."

He took a step toward her, completely ignoring the twenty pairs of teenage eyes tracking his every movement. "Something about... proving a certain R-rated hero wrong about my conversational skills?"

Nemuri's hero composure cracked as a genuine smile spread across her face. She leaned back against her desk, crossing her arms in a way that was both casual and deliberately provocative. "Oh, that's right. I seem to recall making a challenge." Her voice dropped to that trademark sultry tone that made villains confess their crimes and teenage boys forget how to breathe. "Though I have to say, your timing is impeccable. Making your move right after giving relationship advice to my students?"

"Relationship advice?" Kagutsuchi raised an eyebrow, his lips quirking upward. "I prefer to think of it as... mythological consultation."

"Is that what we're calling it now?" Nemuri purred, pushing off from the desk to take a step closer. The space between them seemed to crackle with tension. "And here I thought you were just being mysteriously romantic."

"Romance?" Kagutsuchi's chuckle was low and warm. "Nemuri, I'm an ancient cosmic entity. When I do romance, it involves things like rearranging constellations and composing symphonies from the music of the spheres."

"Ooh, promises, promises," she teased, her eyes sparkling with mischief. "Though I'll settle for that sushi place with the skyline view. For now."

The janitor-slash-Lord stepped closer, close enough that he had to look down to meet her eyes. "Don't be late, goddess. Eternity is a long time, but my patience for Earth cuisine has its limits."

Nemuri tilted her head up, completely unbothered by his intimidating presence – if anything, she seemed energized by it. "Patience? From the being who's been waiting eons to purge Agito from existence?" She clicked her tongue mockingly. "I think I can manage to show up on time for our little... educational dinner."

"Educational?" His voice dropped to barely above a whisper, meant only for her ears, but in the dead silence of the classroom, everyone heard anyway. "Is that what you're calling it?"

"Well," Nemuri's smile turned absolutely wicked, "I am a teacher. I take my professional development very seriously."

For a moment, they stood there, locked in their own little bubble of cosmic flirtation, completely oblivious to their increasingly scandalized audience.

Then Kagutsuchi stepped back, his professional mask sliding smoothly back into place. "Until tonight, then." He turned toward the door, pausing just long enough to add with devastating casualness, "Wear something that won't be damaged if we have to leave suddenly. You never know when Lords might have to... respond to threats."

And with that absolutely loaded parting shot, he pushed open the sliding door and disappeared into the hallway, leaving behind only the soft thud of the door closing and the lingering scent of ozone and something indefinably otherworldly.

The silence stretched for exactly three heartbeats.

Then all hell broke loose.

"WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?!" Bakugo's explosion echoed through the room, both literal and metaphorical.

"Oh my God, oh my God, oh my GOD!" Mina was practically vibrating in her seat, her hands pressed to her cheeks. "That was the most romantic thing I've ever seen and also the most terrifying!"

"Did he just threaten to fight someone on their date?!" Sero's voice cracked with disbelief.

"That wasn't a threat," Jiro said faintly, her earphone jacks drooping. "That was foreplay."

"JIRO!" half the class shrieked in unison.

Kaminari was pointing frantically at Nemuri, who was still standing there with that triumphant smile. "Sensei! You're going on a date with the cosmic horror! The guy who could probably unmake reality!"

"The man who has admitted to have killed Agito before, and perhaps a series of other atrocious actions!" Iida's engines were practically steaming with his agitation. "This is highly irregular! What about professional boundaries?!"

"What about the age difference?!" Mineta wailed. "He's like, older than civilization!"

"What about the fact that he's HOT?!" Mina added, causing several students to whip around and stare at her in shock.

Tokoyami nodded sagely. "The darkness recognizes darkness. There is a certain... gothic appeal to their dynamic."

"You're all missing the point!" Uraraka floated slightly in her excitement. "They were totally flirting! Like, hardcore flirting! In front of us!"

"I don't think I've ever seen Midnight-sensei look at anyone like that," Momo observed, her analytical mind somehow still functioning despite the chaos. "She seemed... genuinely interested. Not just playful."

"And did you see the way he looked at her?!" Toru's uniform was practically dancing with her excitement. "Like she was the only person in the room! So romantic!"

"Romantic?!" Kirishima's hair was practically standing on end. "The guy literally just implied their dinner date might turn into a supernatural battle!"

"Yeah, and she seemed totally into it!" Ashido pointed out. "Did you hear her voice when she called it 'educational'? That was not about learning proper table manners!"

Meanwhile, Nemuri stood at the front of the class, basking in the absolute pandemonium she and Kagutsuchi had unleashed. Her smile was pure, unadulterated satisfaction.

"Sensei!" Yaoyorozu finally managed to make herself heard above the chaos. "Are you... are you actually going on a date with Kagutsuchi-san?"

Nemuri's smile somehow managed to get even more smug. "Well, class," she said, her voice cutting through the noise like silk through steel, "this has been educational for all of us, hasn't it? You've chosen your hero names, and I..." She paused dramatically, examining her manicured nails. "I've accepted a dinner invitation from the most dangerous, mysterious, and devastatingly attractive being currently walking the Earth."

The room erupted again.

"SENSEI!"

"You can't just say that and not give us details!"

"Is this even legal?!"

"What are you going to wear?!"

"Are you going to survive?!"

"Can we place bets on whether he shows up in the janitor uniform?!"

Nemuri laughed, a sound of pure delight. "My dear students," she said, gathering her papers with deliberate slowness, "some mysteries are better left unsolved. At least..." Her eyes gleamed. "Until tomorrow's class."

And with that, she swept out of the room, leaving behind twenty-one thoroughly scandalized, fascinated, and utterly bewildered teenagers.

The silence lasted approximately two seconds before everyone started talking at once, all hero names completely forgotten in favor of dissecting the most unexpected romantic development in U.A. history.