The sun was a mere hint of warmth on the horizon, its pale light stretching across the surface of the ocean, casting long, muted shadows across Dagobah Beach. The air, cool and sharp with the scent of salt and ozone, carried the rhythmic sigh of the waves breaking on the shore. It was an ethereal silence, broken only by the distant cry of seagulls and the gentle hiss of foam retreating over the sand.

Cross-legged and facing the dawning day, Izuku Midoriya concentrated on the sound. He felt the rough texture of the sand beneath his fingertips, the whisper of the breeze against his skin and the steady, grounding presence of the hero-in-training beside him. Yuga Aoyama was perfectly still, his posture impeccable, a vessel of quiet concentration. This was their ritual. After the punishing physical training, after the strategy sessions and the endless, exhausting conversations, there was this—the quiet work.

Izuku knew that for Aoyama, this was more than just meditation; it was a battle. The Gills Form, a powerful manifestation of his Agito nature, came with immense power, but it also demanded an impossible level of control over the volatile form. The power was tied directly to his emotional state, and he needed a foundation of absolute calm to even begin to tap into it without risking harm.

The sun climbed higher, a disk of molten gold now hanging over the water. Izuku could feel the change in Aoyama's breathing—it deepened, became more deliberate, and a subtle tension coiled beneath the surface of his skin. There was something primal stirring within his friend, something that made the air itself feel charged with potential violence. Izuku kept his own breathing steady, acting as a quiet anchor, a stable point in the swirling chaos of Aoyama's mind.

"The hunger," Aoyama whispered suddenly, his voice barely audible above the waves. "It's... it's always there. Like something wild trying to claw its way out."

"Don't fight it," Izuku replied softly, his eyes still closed. "Accept it as part of you, but don't let it control you."

A bead of sweat rolled down Aoyama's temple despite the cool morning air. His fingers twitched almost imperceptibly, and for a moment, Izuku could swear he felt something predatory in the air around them—a presence that spoke of ancient instincts and barely contained ferocity.

The meditation continued, a silent symphony of effort and stillness. The world was reduced to the sun on their faces, the sound of the waves, and the incredible, fragile will of a young man fighting to master the brilliant, terrifying potential that lay within him.

Izuku's eyes fluttered open first. He found himself staring not at the distant horizon but at the tiny, intricate patterns the waves left on the sand as they receded. The ocean, once a mere backdrop, was now a mesmerizing canvas of light and movement. His mind, which had been so focused on providing a stable anchor for Aoyama, now felt free to wander, retracing the incredible, chaotic path of the past few months.

The revelation of his mother's identity, her connection to Nana Shimura. That meant... that meant that Tomura, the leader of the League of Villains, was his cousin. The thought still felt like ice water in his veins, a reality too surreal to fully grasp. Then came the training camp—what should have been a disaster transformed into victory through Aoyama's desperate courage. The memory of Muscular's crushing grip, of Kota's terrified eyes, and that strange, electric surge that had unleashed his Trinity Form for the first time still made his hands shake.

A small sigh broke the silence, and Izuku turned his head. Aoyama's eyes were also open now, a deep, contemplative indigo that reflected the clear morning sky. There was something different in his gaze—a weight that hadn't been there before their meditation.

"Midoriya-kun," Aoyama said, his usual theatrical flourishes absent, leaving only raw vulnerability. "Do you ever wonder if we're meant for this? If some people are just... born broken?"

Izuku shifted to face him fully, sand scattering from his tracksuit. "What do you mean?"

"This power," Aoyama's hand gestured vaguely toward the ocean, where moments before the very air had bent to his will. "Sometimes it feels like it's not mine. Like I'm borrowing something dangerous that could consume everyone around me." His voice dropped to barely a whisper. "What if I hurt someone? What if I can't stop it?"

The fear in his friend's voice cut through Izuku like a blade. He reached out without thinking, placing a steady hand on Aoyama's shoulder. "Aoyama-kun, look at me."

Those indigo eyes met his, wide and uncertain.

"You're not broken," Izuku said firmly. "And you're not alone in this. When I first used Trinity Form, I nearly destroyed everything around me. The power felt wild, untamed—like trying to hold lightning in my bare hands." He squeezed Aoyama's shoulder. "But we have something now that we didn't have before. We have each other. We have people who understand."

Aoyama was quiet for a long moment, studying Izuku's face as if searching for any hint of deception. Finally, he nodded, some of the tension leaving his shoulders. "You really believe we can master this?"

"I know we can," Izuku replied without hesitation. "But it's going to take work. Real work. Every day."

Aoyama's expression shifted, determination replacing doubt. "Then let's work."

Both boys stood, brushing sand from their clothes. The serene calm of the beach transformed into something electric as they moved into fighting positions. Izuku could see the change in Aoyama—the way his stance adjusted, how his breathing became more controlled yet ready.

"No armor," Izuku said, settling into a ready position. "We need to build your connection to the Gills Form from the ground up. Make it part of you, not something you wrestle with."

Aoyama nodded, a rare, genuine smile crossing his features. "I understand. No holding back?"

"No holding back," Izuku confirmed, and the morning air crackled with anticipation.

Miles away, Toshinori Yagi stood before a familiar door, a bouquet of white lilies trembling slightly in his skeletal hands. He'd come to offer Inko what comfort he could—stories of Nana, memories that might help her understand the woman who had been forced to abandon her children. But as he raised his hand to knock, he caught the tail end of a phone conversation drifting through the thin walls.

"...yes, he's training hard. With a friend from school." Inko's voice carried a warmth that made Toshinori's chest ache with familiarity. "I'll tell him you called, Hisashi. Take care of yourself."

The call ended just as the door swung open. Inko Midoriya stood there, her face still soft with the smile meant for her absent husband, though it flickered with surprise when she saw her visitor.

"Toshinori-san!" She blinked, taking in his gaunt frame and the flowers clutched in his hands. "What a wonderful surprise. Are those for me?"

"Inko-san," he said, his voice rougher than he intended. The flowers felt absurdly small in his hands, inadequate for what he'd come to discuss. "I hope I'm not intruding. I wanted to... we need to talk about Nana. About everything."

Her expression shifted, understanding passing across her features like clouds over sunlight. "Of course. Please, come in." She accepted the lilies with gentle fingers, her touch briefly brushing his. "Izuku left early this morning—he's training with Aoyama-kun down at Dagobah Beach. It's just us."

As she led him inside, Toshinori couldn't help but notice how the apartment seemed to glow with warmth—sunlight streaming through clean windows, the lingering scent of fresh coffee and homemade bread, small touches that spoke of a life built on love and careful attention.

"Coffee?" Inko asked, already moving toward the kitchen. "I just made a fresh pot."

"Please." Toshinori settled into a chair at the small dining table, watching as she moved with practiced efficiency. There was something about her movements, the tilt of her head as she poured, that sent echoes of recognition through him.

Inko set a steaming mug before him and took the seat across the table. "Izuku told me everything," she said without preamble, her hands wrapped around her own cup as if drawing warmth from it. "About you, about Gran Torino-sensei, about the... angels and the Agito." She paused, a knowing smile ghosting across her lips. "At least, everything he wants me to know. That boy thinks he's protecting me by keeping the worst of it to himself."

Toshinori nearly choked on his coffee. "That sounds familiar."

"Does it?" Inko's eyes sparkled with gentle mischief. "And when exactly did you learn to follow your own advice about sharing burdens, Toshinori-san?"

The pointed question hit him like a physical blow, and despite everything—the weight of secrets, the crushing responsibility, the lives hanging in the balance—Toshinori found himself laughing. Really laughing, the sound rusty from disuse but genuine.

"Touché," he wheezed, wiping at his eyes. "I suppose I deserved that."

"You did," Inko agreed, but her expression was fond rather than accusatory. "Now, tell me about her. What was she like? Not All Might's mentor, not the Seventh—just Nana."

Toshinori's smile gentled, and he began to speak. He painted a picture with words—Nana's booming laugh that could fill a room, the way she'd get flustered when anyone complimented her cooking, how she'd hum old jazz standards while patrolling the streets. He spoke of her terrible sense of direction, her fierce protectiveness of those she loved, and the quiet moments when the weight of One For All would settle on her shoulders like a mantle she could never remove.

"She would have loved you," he said finally, his voice soft with conviction. "You have her strength, but tempered with something she always struggled with—the ability to find joy in small moments."

Inko's eyes glistened, but her smile remained steady. "Thank you for that. But..." Her expression grew serious. "What about my brother? Kotaro?"

The warmth drained from Toshinori's face, replaced by something darker. He set down his coffee cup with deliberate care.

"Inko-san," he began carefully, "what I'm about to tell you... it's difficult. Are you sure you want to know?"

"I need to know," she said firmly. "Whatever it is."

Toshinori drew a shaking breath. "After we learned about your connection to Nana, I used my contacts—Detective Tsukauchi, resources from Principal Nezu—to investigate what happened to Kotaro and his family." His voice grew heavier with each word. "What we found was... a house that stood empty. Neighbors who reported strange sounds, then sudden silence. A family that simply... vanished."

Inko's hand flew to her throat. "Vanished?"

"All except one," Toshinori continued, his voice barely above a whisper. "A little boy named Tenko Shimura. Kotaro's son."

The color drained from Inko's face as understanding began to dawn.

"He goes by a different name now," Toshinori said, each word falling like a stone into still water. "Tomura Shigaraki."

The silence that followed was deafening. Inko stared at him, her mouth opening and closing soundlessly as her mind struggled to process the impossible truth.

"The leader of the League of Villains," she whispered finally. "The one who attacked the USJ. Who tried to kill the students at the training camp." Her voice broke. "He's... he's my nephew?"

"Yes," Toshinori confirmed, his own voice thick with grief.

Inko's composure cracked, tears streaming down her face as the full weight of it hit her. "How? How did this happen?"

"All For One," Toshinori said, the name like poison on his tongue. "He's been grooming Tomura since he was a child, shaping him into a weapon of hatred and destruction." He hesitated, then pressed on. "There's more, Inko-san. The investigation uncovered... troubling reports from neighbors. Suggestions that Kotaro may have been abusive toward Tenko."

Inko went utterly still, her tears stopping mid-stream. "Abusive?"

"We can't be certain," Toshinori added quickly. "But if it's true... if Kotaro's resentment over being abandoned by Nana manifested as cruelty toward his own son..." He left the implication hanging.

"Then All For One simply had to wait," Inko finished, her voice hollow. "Wait for my brother to break that little boy, and then swoop in to pick up the pieces."

They sat in silence for a long moment, the weight of generational trauma settling between them like a physical presence.

"Can he be saved?" Inko asked suddenly, her voice small but determined. "Is there any part of Tenko left in him?"

Toshinori met her eyes, seeing in them the same fierce hope that had once burned in Nana's gaze. "I want to believe there is. But Inko-san, you have to understand—All For One has had years to poison his mind. The damage runs deep."

"But not too deep," Inko said firmly, sitting straighter. "He's still family. Still that little boy who lost everything. If there's even the smallest chance..."

"Then we'll take it," Toshinori agreed, his own resolve strengthening in the face of her determination. "But first, we have to stop All For One. As long as he's free, Tomura will never be anything more than his weapon."

Inko nodded, wiping away her tears with the back of her hand. "Then we stop him. Whatever it takes."

Halfway around the world, the sun painted the endless ocean in shades of gold and turquoise as the Quantum of the Seas cut through gentle swells. Nemuri Kayama stood at the ship's railing, her sundress fluttering in the salt-tinged breeze, wide-brimmed hat casting her face in pleasant shadow. This was paradise—warm sun, cool wind, and the vast freedom of the open sea stretching to every horizon.

Strong arms encircled her waist from behind, and she leaned back into Kagutsuchi's solid warmth. His chin settled on her shoulder with familiar ease, and she could feel his contentment in the relaxed set of his muscles, the steady rhythm of his breathing.

"Mmm," she hummed, placing her hands over his where they rested on her stomach. "If this is what retirement feels like, I might have to reconsider my career plans."

His laugh rumbled against her back, a sound she felt as much as heard. "Careful now. You might get used to this level of luxury. Private suites, gourmet meals, perfect weather..." He paused dramatically. "Though I suppose I should mention that the perfect weather is entirely natural. No divine intervention required."

Nemuri twisted in his arms to look at him, eyebrow raised skeptically. "Really? Because this streak of absolutely pristine days seems almost too good to be true."

"Would I lie to the woman I love?" Kagutsuchi's expression was the picture of innocence, though his eyes held a mischievous glint.

"Without hesitation," Nemuri replied dryly, though her smile took any sting out of the words. "Remember the 'emergency' that required us to extend our stay in that Kyoto ryokan? The one that mysteriously resolved itself the morning we were supposed to check out?"

"That was a legitimate crisis that required immediate attention," he protested, though he was fighting back a grin. "The fact that it coincided with the cherry blossom festival was pure coincidence."

"Uh-huh." Nemuri turned back to the ocean, settling more comfortably against him. "Well, legitimate or not, I'm not complaining. Though I have to ask—is the climate change thing really just a political scam like you said?"

Kagutsuchi's laughter this time was louder, earning curious glances from other passengers strolling the deck. "Oh, that old song and dance? It's brilliant, actually—never let a good crisis go to waste, as they say. Some American politician named Al Gore was beating that drum centuries ago, back before Quirks were even a twinkle in humanity's eye. Kept insisting the ice caps were melting, that we'd all end up living in some post-apocalyptic water world like that terrible Kevin Costner movie."

Nemuri burst into delighted laughter. "Waterworld? You're actually referencing Waterworld? That's your go-to example?"

"Hey, it was a formative piece of cinema," Kagutsuchi protested. "Really drove home the absurdity of the whole thing. Centuries later, we've got people with Quirks that can literally control weather patterns, reshape entire landscapes, manipulate the very atmosphere itself, and yet somehow natural climate change is still supposed to be our biggest threat." He shook his head. "Meanwhile, politicians and corporations keep lining their pockets while actual environmental problems get ignored in favor of whatever sounds most dramatic in a sound bite."

Nemuri leaned back against him, feeling the warmth of the sun on her face and the gentle motion of the ship beneath her feet. "You know what I love about you?" she said softly.

"My devastating good looks?"

"Your cynicism," she replied, earning a surprised laugh. "In a world full of heroes and villains, politicians and celebrities, you see through all the posturing to what's actually happening. It's... refreshing."

He tightened his arms around her, pressing a kiss to the top of her head. "Just don't let that get around. I have a reputation to maintain."

"Your secret's safe with me," she murmured, closing her eyes and letting the warmth and motion of the ocean lull her into perfect contentment.

The air in All For One's private chamber hummed with electronic tension, banks of monitors casting cold blue light across surfaces that had never seen natural sun. He sat motionless in his high-backed chair, pale fingers steepled before him as he studied the footage playing on the central screen. The same clips, over and over—a green-haired boy wreathed in golden light, moving with impossible speed and power.

"Fascinating," he murmured to the empty room, his voice carrying the weight of centuries. "Absolutely fascinating."

The boy—Izuku Midoriya—defied every law All For One understood. The armor that materialized around him wasn't technology, wasn't any known Quirk, wasn't anything that should exist in a world governed by the rules he'd spent lifetimes mastering. At the Sports Festival, the child had matched fire with fire, his golden armor somehow generating flames that surpassed even Endeavor's son. On I-Island, he'd moved like living lightning, defeating a villain who should have been far beyond a student's capabilities.

"Diagnosed as Quirkless," All For One said to himself, fingers dancing across a holographic interface. "Dr. Garaki's records are quite clear on that point. And yet..."

The screen shifted, displaying a different image—a woman's ID photo, her gentle features unmistakably familiar. All For One leaned forward, ancient eyes narrowing.

"Inko Midoriya," he read aloud, her name rolling off his tongue like a half-remembered song. "Née Shimura."

The resemblance was undeniable. The shape of her eyes, the curve of her jaw, even the way her hair fell—it was as if he was looking at a ghost. A ghost of the woman who had stood against him, who had inherited One For All and wielded it with such infuriating righteousness.

"Nana," he whispered, the name a curse and a prayer combined.

His searches through official records had been thorough but yielded conflicting information. Most sources indicated Nana Shimura had only one child—Kotaro, whom All For One had used so effectively to bring Tomura into his fold. But there had been whispers, inconsistencies in the data, suggestions of a second child that had somehow remained hidden.

All For One's lips curved in a smile that held no warmth. If this boy truly was connected to Nana's bloodline, if he carried some hidden legacy of power that transcended normal Quirks...

"The symmetry is almost poetic," he mused, pulling up additional files. "One grandchild serves as my successor, while another emerges as a potential threat to everything I've built. Nana's blood, divided against itself."

He would need to investigate further, dig deeper into records that others couldn't access, trace bloodlines and buried secrets until he understood exactly what he was dealing with. Because if this Quirkless boy truly possessed power that existed outside the natural order, then he represented something far more dangerous than any hero.

He represented change. And All For One had not survived this long by allowing change to occur without his explicit permission.

Meanwhile, the League's hideout reeked of stale cigarettes and accumulated failure, the kind of smell that clung to desperate places where desperate people made desperate plans. Tomura Shigaraki hunched over a scarred wooden table, his fingers working at his neck in an unconscious rhythm that left angry red welts on pale skin. The itching never stopped, the constant reminder of everything that crawled beneath his surface.

Across from him, Dabi lounged against the wall with practiced indifference, turquoise eyes reflecting nothing but bored contempt for their current circumstances. Beside him, Himiko Toga bounced on the balls of her feet like a spring-loaded weapon waiting to be triggered, golden eyes bright with the kind of excitement that preceded bloodshed.

"U.A.," Tomura said suddenly, his voice cutting through the stagnant air like a rusted blade. "We're going to hit them where they think they're safe. Right in their precious school."

Dabi's expression shifted slightly, a flicker of interest breaking through his carefully maintained mask of apathy. "Bold. Stupid, but bold."

"Ooh!" Toga practically vibrated with enthusiasm, clapping her hands together with disturbing glee. "Can I go? Please please please? I've always wanted to be a high school girl! All the uniforms and friends and blood and—"

"Slow down there, psycho," Dabi interrupted, pushing off from the wall. "You realize infiltration requires subtlety, right? Something you're not exactly famous for."

Toga's expression morphed into an exaggerated pout, her lower lip jutting out in a way that might have been cute on anyone else. "I can be subtle! I can be the most subtle person ever! I could be so subtle you wouldn't even notice I was—"

"You're proving his point," Tomura said flatly, and the room fell silent. His red eyes fixed on Toga with an intensity that made her bouncing cease. "But you're going anyway."

Her face lit up like a child on Christmas morning.

"However," Tomura continued, his voice dropping to something barely above a whisper, "if you screw this up, if you get caught, if you do anything to jeopardize this operation..." He leaned forward, his hands flat on the table, careful not to engage his Quirk. "You become a liability I'm done carrying. Do we understand each other?"

The playful excitement drained from Toga's features, replaced by something colder, sharper. "Yes, Tomura-kun. I understand perfectly."

Dabi's smirk was almost imperceptible, but Tomura caught it. "Something funny?"

"Just wondering how you plan to actually pull this off," Dabi replied lazily. "U.A. isn't exactly known for their lax security, especially after our little visit to their summer camp."

Tomura's laugh was like broken glass scraping concrete. "We're not going in blind. We're going to find the perfect target—someone so unremarkable, so forgettable, that no one would notice if they started acting... different."

He gestured to a cracked tablet displaying U.A.'s public student roster. "We'll spend weeks studying them. Background checks, surveillance, psychological profiles. We need someone who can disappear for at least two weeks without causing a panic."

"Two weeks?" Toga tilted her head like a curious bird. "I can hold a form for a full day with just a milliliter of blood. Why three?"

"Because," Tomura said, his fingers drumming against the table in a rhythm that matched his perpetual scratching, "one day to replace them, the rest to gather intelligence, and one final day to escape before anyone notices the inconsistencies." His smile was nothing but sharp edges. "What happens to our borrowed student after those two weeks, Dabi?"

Dabi shrugged with characteristic indifference. "Kill them, dump the body, send a message. The usual."

Tomura considered this, his head tilting as he weighed options. "No. We let them go."

Both Dabi and Toga stared at him in surprise.

"Think about it," Tomura continued, his voice taking on the cadence of someone explaining a complex strategy. "A traumatized student returning with stories of the League of Villains, of how easily we infiltrated their most secure institution, of how powerless their heroes really are..." His smile widened. "That kind of psychological warfare is worth more than one dead body."

Toga's expression shifted through several emotions before settling on something approaching professional interest. "I won't let you down, Tomura-kun. I'll be the perfect little student."

"We'll see," Tomura replied, his voice carrying promises of consequences that none of them wanted to contemplate.

The abandoned district stretched out like a monument to urban decay, buildings that had given up pretending to matter arranged in neat rows of surrender. Dabi moved through the streets with the easy confidence of someone who belonged in forgotten places, his long coat cutting a sharp silhouette against the backdrop of peeling paint and rust-stained brick.

The boarding house was exactly what it appeared to be—a place where people came to disappear. The desk clerk, a man whose best days had been decades behind him, barely looked up from his magazine as Dabi passed.

"Rent's coming tomorrow," Dabi said without breaking stride.

The clerk grunted acknowledgment, already forgetting the interaction as it happened.

Dabi's room was on the third floor, up stairs that creaked protests with every step. The door was metal, dented from years of careless treatment, and it screamed on hinges that had given up on lubrication sometime in the previous century. Inside, the space was spartanly furnished—a mattress that had seen better decades, a folding table that wobbled with any disturbance, and a bookshelf holding exactly seven books that looked like they'd been salvaged from a dumpster fire.

He moved immediately to the window, pulling down blinds that had probably been installed during the previous century, then covering them with a heavy blanket that turned the room into a cave. No sniper scopes, no surveillance equipment, no curious eyes from the buildings across the street—complete privacy in a world where such things were increasingly rare.

The bookshelf yielded its real treasure when he pulled out a battered copy of "1984," its pages hollowed out to create a perfect hiding space. From within, he extracted a communication device so small and sophisticated that it seemed to belong to a different century than the room around it.

The earpiece fit perfectly, invisible beneath his dark hair. He activated it with a touch so light it barely registered, then spoke a single word into the air of his decrepit sanctuary:

"Checkmate."

The response came immediately, a voice that carried authority across whatever encrypted channels connected him to his real employer.

"Report."

"The plan is in motion," Dabi said softly, his voice barely above a whisper in the empty room. "Toga will infiltrate U.A. once the school year rolls around. Shigaraki believes he's orchestrating a masterpiece of psychological warfare."

A pause, then: "And you believe?"

Dabi's smile was sharp enough to cut glass. "I believe our dear leader is exactly as predictable as we hoped he'd be. He's walking right into the trap, and he thinks he's the one setting it."

"Excellent. Maintain your position. When the time comes, you'll know what to do."

The connection ended, leaving Dabi alone in his decrepit sanctuary. He carefully returned the communication device to its hiding place, replaced the book on its shelf, and allowed himself a moment of genuine satisfaction.

Shigaraki thought he was playing chess, moving pieces across a board of his own design. But the game had started long before he'd ever learned the rules, and the real players were already twenty moves ahead. All that remained was to let the pawns reach the end of the board.

Five days later, the morning ritual had become second nature. Izuku and Aoyama sat cross-legged on the familiar stretch of sand, the rhythm of their breathing synchronized with the endless pulse of the waves. Five days of this—meditation at dawn, followed by sparring until the sun climbed high enough to make the sand uncomfortable beneath their feet.

The meditation ended naturally, both boys opening their eyes at almost the same moment. Aoyama's expression was calmer than it had been when they'd started this routine, the perpetual tension in his shoulders finally beginning to ease.

"Ready for sparring?" Izuku asked, stretching as he stood.

"Always," Aoyama replied, a genuine smile crossing his features as he rose gracefully to his feet.

They began with basic exchanges—punches and blocks, kicks and counters—but Izuku immediately noticed the improvement. Aoyama's movements flowed like water now, each strike precise and controlled rather than driven by the barely contained violence that had once characterized his fighting style.

"Much better," Izuku said, deflecting a smooth combination. "You're moving more fluidly now. The aggression is there, but it's not controlling you."

Aoyama's smile widened at the praise, a flash of genuine pride in his indigo eyes. "It feels different. Like the hunger is still there, but it's... mine now, instead of something trying to consume me."

They continued their dance of combat, sand scattering with each movement. Aoyama's strikes carried the predatory grace of his Gills nature without the manic desperation that had once made him dangerous to friend and foe alike. His footwork was smoother, his breathing steady even as they increased the intensity.

Both boys froze simultaneously.

Something was wrong. Every enhanced sense they possessed screamed danger as two figures emerged from the tree line at the far end of the beach, moving with deliberate purpose across the sand toward them.

The first was humanoid but unmistakably inhuman—a powerful, athletic physique covered in deep reddish-brown skin marked with striking patterns of white and blue stripes that gave him an almost tribal appearance. His torso was exceptionally well-defined, muscles pronounced beneath the strange markings. But it was his head that marked him as truly alien: scaly, deep red features dominated by sharp, elongated teeth visible in a wide, predatory grin. A dense mass of red dreadlocks or tendrils crowned his skull, framing dark eyes that held nothing but malevolent intelligence.

He wore minimal clothing—a pleated white cloth secured at the waist by an ornate golden belt, a long dark blue sash hanging from the front. His feet were mismatched: the left covered by a coarse, light-colored boot, the right bare save for a simple sandal and golden ankle bracelets adorning both ankles. Golden ornaments decorated his upper body—a wide collar, crisscrossing blue and red bands across his chest and shoulders.

In his hands, he carried a strange weapon: a golden-handled implement ending in a bell-like shape, from which extended a multicolored, segmented whip.

The second figure was even more intimidating—humanoid but encased in fearsome armor that spoke of death and shadow. His head was covered by a dark, metallic helmet shaped into a long, sharp beak like some monstrous raven. Small horns protruded from the top, adding to his intimidating silhouette.

Dark, layered material covered his body—a combination of hardened leather and dense black feathers that formed a cape-like arrangement flowing from his waist. His arms were clad in similar dark material with studded bracers, more feathers adorning his forearms. Heavy, protective boots decorated with small skeletal remains and metal studs completed the ensemble.

In his right hand, he gripped a massive curved blade with a wide, serrated edge—a weapon that looked both heavy and lethally efficient. Bright red fabric hung from his left hand, a stark contrast to his otherwise dark and foreboding form.

"Lords," Izuku breathed, recognition and dread filling his voice.

The two creatures suddenly broke into a sprint, moving at inhuman speed across the sand. There was no negotiation, no words—only the clear intent to kill radiating from their forms like heat from a forge.

Light exploded around both boys as they transformed without hesitation. Izuku's golden and black armor materialized in a cascade of brilliant energy, while Aoyama's green and gold form emerged with predatory grace. They met the Lords' charge head-on, the beach erupting into chaos as four superhuman fighters collided.

Izuku found himself matched against the raven-armored Lord, the creature's massive blade whistling through the air with devastating force. Each impact sent shockwaves through his armor, the serrated edge seeking gaps in his defenses with mechanical precision. But Izuku's training held—he flowed around the attacks, his enhanced speed allowing him to stay just ahead of the deadly blade.

Beside him, Aoyama danced with the tribal Lord, the creature's segmented whip cracking through the air like lightning. But where once Aoyama might have met such aggression with mindless fury, now he fought with controlled precision, his movements fluid and purposeful.

"Good," Izuku thought, deflecting another massive swing. "He's maintaining control even under pressure."

But as the battle intensified, Izuku began to notice changes in his friend's fighting style. Aoyama's strikes were becoming more vicious, his movements more predatory. The controlled grace was giving way to something rawer, hungrier.

The tipping point came when the tribal Lord's whip wrapped around Aoyama's ankle, yanking him off balance. Instead of recovering with his usual fluid grace, Aoyama let out a sound that was more beast than human—a guttural roar that made the air itself seem to vibrate.

His mouthplate snapped open, revealing rows of sharp mandibles. Without hesitation, he lunged forward, catching the raven Lord's massive blade between his jaws and crushing it like paper. The serrated metal shattered, fragments scattering across the sand.

Before the Lord could react, Aoyama's mandibles found his beaked helmet, tearing through the dark metal with a sickening crunch. Dark ichor sprayed across the sand as he ripped away a portion of the creature's face.

A scythe-like blade extended from Aoyama's right forearm, and he brought it across in a devastating arc that bisected the Lord entirely. The creature dissolved into mist, but Aoyama's bloodlust was far from sated.

Seeing his companion fall, Izuku quickly ended his own battle, charging his right fist with devastating energy before delivering a punch that obliterated his opponent in a flash of golden light. The second Lord dissolved just like the first.

But there was no time to celebrate. Aoyama had turned toward him, a bestial roar tearing from his throat as his jaws gaped wide, mandibles dripping with the Lords' ichor. His eyes held no recognition—only the endless hunger of a predator that had tasted blood.

Izuku didn't hesitate. He tackled his friend with the full force of his armor, driving him into the sand. What followed was brutal—a desperate struggle as Izuku systematically beat down his transformed friend, each strike calculated to incapacitate without causing permanent damage.

But something was wrong. As they fought, Izuku noticed with growing horror that Aoyama's horns—usually shorter than his head crests—were growing longer with each passing moment. His friend was getting stronger, faster, more savage. The sand around them clouded from the intensity of their movements, a miniature storm born of superhuman violence.

With no choice left, Izuku switched forms. His armor shifted from gold and black to black and red—his Flame Form, designed for maximum destructive output. He drew back his fist, preparing to deliver a knockout blow that would end this before Aoyama hurt someone.

But just as his punch was about to land, Aoyama suddenly recoiled, his hands flying to his head as he let out an anguished cry. Through sheer force of will, he was fighting to regain control, his body trembling with the effort.

For a long moment, they remained frozen—Izuku with his fist poised to strike, Aoyama writhing in internal battle. Then, with a sound like breaking chains, Aoyama forced himself out of transformation. His armor dissolved into motes of light as he collapsed to his knees, gasping for breath.

Izuku immediately powered down, his own armor fading as he rushed to his friend's side. "Aoyama! Are you okay?"

Aoyama looked up at him with eyes that were once again human, filled with shame and lingering fear. "I... I almost..." He couldn't finish the sentence, his hands shaking as the reality of what had nearly happened settled over him.

"But you didn't," Izuku said firmly, placing a steady hand on his friend's shoulder. "You pulled back. You regained control."

"Barely," Aoyama whispered, his voice hollow. "If you hadn't been there..."

"But I was," Izuku replied. "And I always will be. That's what this training is for—to make sure you never have to face this alone."

Aoyama nodded slowly, some of the tension leaving his shoulders. The beach was quiet again, the only evidence of their battle the scattered fragments of the Lord's shattered blade and the churned sand where they had fought.

It would take time—more meditation, more training, more moments like this where Aoyama had to choose between control and surrender. But today, he had chosen control. That was progress, even if it didn't feel like victory.

Highway Overlook - Same Time

From the corner of the highway that curved around Dagobah Beach, three figures stood frozen in absolute shock, their planned girls' day out forgotten in the face of what they had just witnessed.

Itsuka Kendo's orange hair whipped in the ocean breeze as she stared down at the beach below, her mouth slightly open in disbelief. Beside her, Yui Kodai's usually impassive expression had cracked, her dark eyes wide with something approaching horror. Ibara Shiozaki's vine-like hair writhed unconsciously around her shoulders, responding to her emotional turmoil as her hands flew to cover her mouth.

They had come here for something simple—a day away from hero training, away from the pressure of their studies. Just three friends enjoying the summer break with shopping, maybe some time at the beach, casual conversation about anything except Quirks and combat and the weight of their future responsibilities.

Instead, they had arrived just in time to witness what appeared to be a brutal execution.

"Did we just..." Itsuka's voice came out as barely a whisper, her leader's composure completely shattered. "Did we just watch Midoriya and Aoyama murder two people?"

From their vantage point on the highway, the details had been unclear but the broad strokes unmistakable. Two strange figures approaching the beach. The sudden eruption of golden and green light as the UA students transformed into some kind of armor. A brief, violent confrontation that ended with both strangers simply... dissolving into mist.

But it was what came after that had truly horrified them. They had watched Aoyama turn on Midoriya with what could only be described as bestial fury, his jaws—jaws that definitely shouldn't exist on a human being—snapping at his classmate with clear intent to kill. They had seen Midoriya's armor shift from gold to red as he systematically beat his friend into the sand until the green-armored figure collapsed.

"Those weren't people," Yui said quietly, her analytical mind struggling to process what she'd seen. "People don't dissolve into mist when they die. And those shapes... they weren't quite human, were they?"

"But Aoyama," Ibara whispered, her voice thick with distress. "What happened to Aoyama? The way he moved, the sounds he made... that wasn't human either."

Itsuka's hands clenched into fists at her sides, her Big Fist Quirk threatening to activate from sheer emotional overflow. "We need to report this. To the teachers, to the heroes, to someone. Whatever we just saw—"

"Who would believe us?" Yui interrupted, her voice taking on its usual flat tone as she forced herself back toward rationality. "That we saw two of our classmates in mysterious armor fighting creatures that dissolved into mist? That one of them transformed into some kind of monster?"

"Then what do we do?" Itsuka demanded, though her voice lacked its usual commanding authority. "Pretend we didn't see anything? Go back to school and act normal around them?"

Ibara's vines had stilled, her expression growing troubled as she watched the two figures on the beach below. Even from this distance, she could see Midoriya helping Aoyama to his feet, the gesture achingly normal after the violence they had just witnessed.

"Perhaps," she said slowly, "we should observe them more carefully. If they are truly dangerous, we will see more signs. If they are not..." She paused, uncertainty creeping into her voice. "Then perhaps there is more to this story than we understand."

"You want to spy on them?" Itsuka asked, though there was no condemnation in her voice—only exhausted confusion.

"I want to understand," Ibara replied firmly. "Before we make any decisions that could destroy our classmates' lives, I want to know the truth."

The three girls stood in silence for a long moment, watching as Midoriya and Aoyama began walking away from the beach. From this distance, they looked like any other pair of teenagers—tired, perhaps, from morning exercise, but utterly mundane.

Nothing like the armored warriors who had just fought creatures from a nightmare.

"This stays between us," Itsuka said finally, her leadership instincts reasserting themselves even in the face of the impossible. "Until we know more, until we understand what we really saw, this doesn't leave our group."

Yui and Ibara nodded, but none of them moved to leave their vantage point. The planned day of shopping and relaxation felt impossibly trivial now, replaced by questions that had no easy answers and the weight of a secret that could change everything.

Below them, Dagobah Beach had returned to its usual tranquil state, waves washing away the churned sand as if nothing had happened at all. But the three girls would carry the memory of what they had witnessed, and the terrible uncertainty of what it meant for their classmates—and for themselves.