The morning sun filtered through U.A. High School's windows with deceptive normalcy, casting golden rectangles across hallways that hummed with an unusual tension. Students moved like sleepwalkers through their routines, their conversations reduced to hushed whispers that seemed to carry the weight of ancient secrets.

In the cafeteria, the usual chaos of clinking trays and boisterous laughter had been replaced by something resembling a wake. Kendo sat rigid at her table, her breakfast cooling untouched as she stared at nothing. Across from her, Monoma methodically arranged grains of rice with surgical precision, his usual theatrical flair nowhere to be found.

"I can't stop thinking about Noah," Uraraka's voice barely rose above a whisper, her fork pushing eggs around her plate in aimless circles. "Thirty years. Thirty years of hammering and sawing, knowing-knowing-that everyone he couldn't save would..."

Her words trailed off, but the weight of the unfinished sentence settled over their table like a shroud.

Todoroki's heterochromatic eyes reflected the morning light as he stared out the window. "The burden of choice," he said quietly. "When you have the power to save some, but not all, how do you decide? How do you live with that decision?"

Iida's hands, usually animated with precise gestures, lay flat on the table. "It makes our complaints seem..." He swallowed hard. "Trivial. Petty, even. Training exercises and test scores—what are those compared to holding the fate of humanity in your hands?"

Even Bakugo, notorious for his morning tirades about "extras" and "weaklings," attacked his breakfast with uncharacteristic silence. His explosive energy seemed dampened, contained within the pressure cooker of thoughts too complex for his usual vocabulary of threats and insults.

The teachers, meanwhile, drifted through their morning routines in blissful ignorance of the cosmic shift their students had experienced. Aizawa clutched his coffee mug like a life preserver, while Present Mic's enthusiasm remained at its trademark ear-splitting volume.

"MORNING, LITTLE LISTENERS!" His voice ricocheted off the walls, causing several students to flinch as if struck by lightning. "READY FOR ANOTHER BEAUTIFUL DAY OF LEARNING?!"

The affected students exchanged glances that spoke volumes—how do you explain that you've witnessed the foundations of reality itself when your teacher is asking about homework?

It was into this atmosphere of profound contemplation that Kagutsuchi entered, whistling a tune that seemed to belong to a different world entirely. His mop bucket clinked rhythmically against the floor as he worked, the sound jarringly cheerful against the morning's heavy mood.

Students parted before him with newfound reverence, offering respectful nods that he returned with genuine warmth. The disconnect was surreal—here was a being who had witnessed the rise and fall of empires, who had stood witness to divine judgment, and he was... mopping floors. And clearly enjoying every minute of it.

"He seems almost... content," Kaminari observed, his usual morning fog replaced by bewildered fascination.

"Perhaps there is wisdom in simple labor," Tokoyami replied, his voice carrying its characteristic darkness. "The humble task that connects us to our humanity, even when we've glimpsed divinity."

Sero shrugged, apparently untroubled by the metaphysical implications. "Or maybe he just really likes clean floors."

Near the vending machines, Izuku stood frozen before an array of breakfast options, each choice feeling monumentally important. The events of the previous evening had left him feeling unmoored, as if the ground beneath his feet had shifted when he wasn't looking. The revelation of his bloodline—Noah, Christ himself—pressed against his chest like a physical weight.

He selected milk, something simple and familiar, hoping the ordinary ritual might anchor him to normalcy. The coins clinked into the machine, the selection dropped with a soft thud, and he retrieved his purchase with hands that trembled slightly.

The first sip was still on his lips when movement in the courtyard caught his eye.

Ibara Shiozaki moved across the grass with the serene determination of a woman on a divine mission. Her vine-like hair swayed hypnotically in the morning breeze, and over her school uniform, she wore a simple white robe that reached her ankles. Cradled against her chest was something small, white, and unmistakably woolly.

Izuku blinked hard, certain his overwrought mind was playing tricks on him. But no—that was definitely a live lamb nestled in Shiozaki's arms, and she was definitely arranging stones in the center of the courtyard with the methodical precision of someone constructing...

The milk carton slipped from his nerveless fingers, exploding against the freshly mopped floor in a splash of white.

Down the hallway, Kagutsuchi's cheerful whistling died mid-note. His head snapped up with predatory alertness, eyes immediately finding the window. His expression cycled through confusion, recognition, and what could only be described as existential dread.

"Oh no," he whispered, his mop clattering to the floor. "Oh no, no, no, NO—"

They moved simultaneously, their footsteps echoing through the corridor like gunshots. Students pressed themselves against walls as the two figures barreled past, bewildered by the sudden urgency.

"What's the emergency?" Iida called after them, his engines already beginning to rev.

Izuku burst through the courtyard doors with all the grace of a small explosion. "SHIOZAKI!"

Kagutsuchi was right behind him, his usual dignified composure completely abandoned. "MISS SHIOZAKI, PLEASE STEP AWAY FROM THE ALTAR!"

In the center of the courtyard, Ibara had indeed constructed what could only be described as a sacrificial altar—carefully arranged stones topped with a flat piece of concrete she'd somehow acquired. The lamb in her arms gazed around with mild curiosity, apparently unbothered by its starring role in what was rapidly becoming the morning's main event.

"Good morning, Midoriya-kun! Good morning, Kagutsuchi-sama!" Shiozaki's voice carried the serene enthusiasm of someone completely unaware of the chaos she'd unleashed. "I have prepared a proper offering to show reverence for the divine presence we were blessed to witness!"

"WHAT?!" The shout came from multiple windows simultaneously, where faces—both comprehending and completely bewildered—pressed against glass.

"No, no, absolutely not!" Kagutsuchi approached the altar with his hands raised in surrender, sweat actually beading on his forehead. "There will be no offerings! No sacrifices! Not even symbolic ones!"

"But Kagutsuchi-sama," Shiozaki's expression radiated innocent confusion, "surely proper reverence requires traditional—"

"It requires NOTHING of the sort!" Kagutsuchi's voice cracked slightly as he reached for the lamb. "Please, just... give me the lamb. Where did you even GET a lamb?!"

"My family raises sheep," Shiozaki replied helpfully, reluctantly surrendering the small animal. The lamb immediately began exploring Kagutsuchi's face with its tongue, as if sensing something familiar. "I brought Wooliam specifically for this holy purpose."

"You NAMED it?!" Izuku's voice climbed into ranges typically reserved for dog whistles.

Before anyone could respond, Principal Nezu's voice crackled over the intercom with the tired authority of someone who'd seen everything:

"Attention all students and faculty. I feel compelled to remind everyone that U.A. High School has a strict no-sacrifice policy. This includes but is not limited to burnt offerings, libations, symbolic livestock presentations, or the construction of altars in our courtyard. Please conduct all religious observances in accordance with basic animal welfare guidelines and common sense. Thank you."

The courtyard fell silent except for Wooliam's contented chewing on Kagutsuchi's collar and the barely suppressed laughter drifting down from the windows above.

Shiozaki's vines drooped with genuine disappointment. "But I only wanted to show proper respect..."

Kagutsuchi, still clutching the lamb while trying to untangle his uniform from its mouth, took a shuddering breath. "Miss Shiozaki, while I... deeply appreciate the sentiment, modern worship doesn't require animal sacrifice. It's been strongly discouraged for several millennia."

"Oh." Her vines drooped further. "But in the Old Testament—"

"Different time, different customs," Kagutsuchi interrupted gently, awkwardly attempting to pat Wooliam while the lamb systematically destroyed his appearance. "These days, prayer and good deeds are perfectly sufficient."

"Are you absolutely certain?"

"Very, very certain," Izuku and Kagutsuchi said in unison, their voices carrying the desperate edge of people who had narrowly averted an international incident.

From the building, Aizawa's voice cut across the courtyard with resigned authority: "Shiozaki, dismantle the altar immediately. Midoriya, get to class. And someone please explain how livestock got past security!"

The faculty room had become ground zero for what would undoubtedly become U.A.'s most retold story. Kagutsuchi slumped in his chair like a deflated balloon, his coffee growing cold in hands that still trembled slightly. Behind his desk, Wooliam the lamb had made himself comfortable, contentedly destroying a stack of graded papers while Thirteen cooed over him like a proud grandmother.

"Wait, wait, hold on!" Midnight leaned forward, mascara slightly smudged from tears of laughter. "Let me get this straight. After all your grand speeches about divine heritage and spiritual awakening, one of your students brought a sacrificial lamb to school?"

Kagutsuchi's response was a sound somewhere between a groan and a death rattle.

This only sent Midnight into fresh peals of laughter. Present Mic joined in, his booming guffaws rattling the windows and causing several teachers to wince.

"I cannot BELIEVE I missed this!" Present Mic slammed the table hard enough to make everyone jump. "You—a literal ancient cosmic being—are now officially the teacher most likely to receive animal sacrifices from students! This is comedy GOLD!"

From his sleeping bag in the corner, Aizawa's muffled voice carried a note of dark amusement: "At least now I know someone else has bigger classroom management problems than me."

Midnight wiped her eyes, grinning like a shark. "Tell us again about the lamb licking your face! I need details for the story I'm telling at the next faculty mixer!"

Kagutsuchi fixed her with a look that could have melted steel. "I believe the morning's chaos provided sufficient entertainment."

"Oh, come on!" Present Mic was practically vibrating with glee. "With all the divine energy you radiate, you were practically asking for this! What's next, burnt offerings during lunch?"

"Hilarious," Kagutsuchi deadpanned, his voice flatter than week-old soda.

"Absolutely knee-slapping," Aizawa added from his cocoon of fabric and despair.

Kagutsuchi stared into his coffee as if it might contain answers to questions he was afraid to ask. Millennia of existence, and somehow none of it had prepared him for the chaotic unpredictability of teenage heroics students with religious fervor.

Behind him, Wooliam let out a satisfied bleat and settled down for a nap on his destroyed paperwork.

The League of Villains' hideout existed in permanent twilight, all harsh shadows and insufficient lighting. Tomura Shigaraki hunched over a low table, his gloved hands clenching and unclenching with restless energy that had nowhere to go. The silence wasn't peaceful—it was suffocating, pressing down like a physical weight that made breathing feel like work.

Toga's arrest played on endless loop in his mind, each replay adding another layer of bitter frustration. Weeks of planning, of careful positioning, all gone in one catastrophic moment. She'd been their most effective infiltrator, their key to getting close to the heroes, and now...

Now she was gone.

His fingers found the familiar path to his neck, scratching at skin already raw from similar sessions. The word that haunted him felt like poison on his tongue: leak.

Someone had sold them out. Someone in their inner circle had betrayed them, and the thought made his skin crawl with more than just his usual irritation.

He ran through the suspects with methodical precision. Dabi was the obvious choice—mysterious past, unclear motivations, that insufferable attitude that suggested he thought he was better than the rest of them. But Shigaraki had been careful, had Dabi's apartment monitored for months. The only sounds they ever picked up were the click of lighters and the rustle of takeout bags. Dabi had secrets, certainly, but betrayal didn't seem to be one of them.

Kurogiri was impossible—he was All For One's creation, engineered for loyalty at the most fundamental level. Suspecting him would be like suspecting his own shadow.

Magne was unpredictable, driven by ideals that didn't always align with practical villainy, but she was a survivor. Betraying the League would mean death or worse, and Magne was too smart to trade her freedom for anything less than guaranteed safety.

The others he'd freed from the box—Stain and the remaining three prisoners—they owed their second chance to him. He'd given them freedom, a new life of villainy. Why would they betray the man who had broken their chains? But then again, loyalty could be bought, convictions could be swayed...

His scratching intensified, nails digging deeper until he felt the familiar sting of broken skin. The answer had to be there, somewhere in the web of personalities and motivations, but it remained frustratingly out of reach.

Deep beneath the city, in a facility that existed on no official blueprints, All For One held court in a chamber of screens and shadows. The pale light from dozens of monitors cast ghostly patterns across his featureless mask as data flowed past in endless streams. Beside him, Dr. Kyudai Garaki hunched over a floating tablet, his expression one of scientific fascination mixed with growing unease.

"The boy's medical records are absolutely clear, Master," Garaki muttered, adjusting his glasses for the hundredth time. "Midoriya Izuku was definitively diagnosed as Quirkless. I examined him myself as a child—there was no trace of any superhuman ability."

All For One's attention remained fixed on the largest monitor, which displayed footage from the U.A. Sports Festival and the I-Island incident. Izuku Midoriya moved across the screen in armor that seemed to bend reality around it, power radiating from him in waves that made the camera shake.

"Then explain this 'enigmatic insect mutation' Quirk, Doctor." All For One's voice carried the cold precision of a scalpel. "This is clearly not the work of a Quirkless individual, nor does it match any known manifestation of One For All."

Garaki's fingers flew across his tablet, pulling up charts and genetic sequences that painted a picture of impossibility. "A false negative diagnosis remains the only logical explanation—a Quirk so deeply dormant it evades every diagnostic tool, only manifesting under extreme circumstances. Such cases are extraordinarily rare, but not theoretically impossible."

"But observe the nature of the manifestation," All For One continued, his chair swiveling to face additional screens. "The adaptive qualities, the modular evolution—this bears no resemblance to any normal Quirk development. And according to Shigaraki's reports, it's not unique to Midoriya. Yuga Aoyama displayed similar phenomena during the training camp incident."

Garaki's hands stilled completely. His eyes widened behind his spectacles as the implications hit him like a physical blow. "Master... you're absolutely right. Aoyama shouldn't be able to develop any additional Quirks. The Quirk you gave him should be the only one he ever possesses. This is..."

His voice gained a frantic edge, excitement mixing with terror. "This is it, Master! The Quirk Singularity Theory I proposed decades ago—it's not just coming true, it's evolving beyond my wildest projections! This isn't simple awakening; it's metamorphosis, evolution triggered by external pressure. We're witnessing the birth of something entirely new."

All For One leaned back in his chair, a sound like distant thunder rumbling from behind his mask. "Fascinating theory, Doctor. But theories require proof, and proof requires data. If Midoriya and Aoyama can manifest such abilities under impossible circumstances, who's to say they're alone? I've been researching, digging through archives that date back to the early 2000s, searching for any similar anomalies."

The doctor looked at him with a mixture of scientific excitement and primal fear. He understood perfectly—the boy was no longer just a loose end or even a potential asset. He was a key to understanding something that could reshape the very foundations of their world.

And until they understood what he represented, he had to be contained.

Class 1-B buzzed with nervous energy during their afternoon break, small groups forming and dissolving as students processed the morning's events. Near the windows, Setsuna Tokage had detached one arm to gesticulate wildly while the rest of her lounged in a chair with theatrical casualness.

"I'm telling you, it was absolutely surreal," she whispered, her disembodied hand painting elaborate pictures in the air. "One minute we're having this deep, philosophical awakening about the nature of heroism, and the next minute Ibara's out there with a sacrificial altar like she's auditioning for a biblical epic!"

Kinoko Komori shuddered visibly, her mushroom-based Quirk causing small fungi to sprout nervously on her desk. "Thank goodness Kagutsuchi and Midoriya got there in time. That poor little lamb..."

Their conversation faltered as they noticed Ibara sitting rigidly at her desk, her hands clasped so tightly her knuckles had gone white. Her lips moved in what was clearly fervent, silent prayer—probably begging forgiveness for nearly turning their school into the site of a religious incident.

Jurota Shishida approached her with the careful gentleness of someone dealing with wounded wildlife. "Ibara, please don't torment yourself over this. You meant well, and no harm was actually done. Kagutsuchi seemed more concerned than angry."

He paused, choosing his words carefully. "Perhaps in the future, you might consider more... symbolic expressions of faith? Something that doesn't require livestock?"

From across the room, Awase couldn't resist adding, "What's next, you guys gonna start your own church or something?"

The question hung in the air like an unexploded bomb. Ibara's head rose slowly, and a thoughtful expression crossed her face.

"A church..." she said slowly, as if tasting the word.

The response was immediate and unanimous:

"NO, IBARA, NO!"

"Don't even think about it!"

"We have enough group projects!"

"Please, for the love of—well, maybe not for the love of anything right now!"

Ibara blinked, then surprised them all with a soft, genuine laugh. "You're right to be concerned. I nearly made a terrible mistake this morning. My zeal was misplaced, wasn't it? Thank goodness Midoriya and Kagutsuchi-sama stopped me before I could do something truly awful."

She smiled, and for the first time since morning, it reached her eyes. "I'll try to be more thoughtful in how I express my devotion."

Kendo, who had been watching the exchange with the weary expression of a parent dealing with particularly creative children, walked over and placed a gentle hand on Ibara's shoulder. "Your faith isn't misplaced at all. The key is channeling that passion into the heroic work we'll be doing as pros. That's what it's really about, isn't it?"

A chorus of agreement rippled through the group, the tension finally beginning to ease.

But as the conversation shifted toward lighter topics, the underlying weight of their new knowledge remained. Hiryu Rin leaned back in his chair, his expression thoughtful. "I still can't quite wrap my head around everything Kagutsuchi showed us. The scope of it all..."

Kojiro Bondo nodded slowly. "The idea that there are forces out there that we never even knew existed, and that Midoriya and Aoyama are somehow connected to all of it..."

Reiko Yanagi, always the philosopher of their group, posed the question that had been haunting them all: "But what does it mean for them, really? What is it about them specifically that makes them... what did he call them? Agito?"

The group exchanged uncertain glances before Neito Monoma, who had been uncharacteristically quiet, spoke up. His usual theatrical arrogance was tempered by something grimmer, more serious.

"What do you think it means?" he said, though his voice lacked its usual mocking edge. "Honenuki, remind them what Kagutsuchi told us about the Agito's... situation."

Juzo Honenuki's expression darkened. "They're hunted," he said simply. "By the Lords—Kagutsuchi's fellow angels. They're marked for death unless they meet certain... criteria."

The words settled over the group like a funeral shroud. Itsuka, Yui, and Ibara all remembered what they'd witnessed at Dagobah Beach—Izuku and Aoyama fighting those armored creatures by themselves. They remembered stumbling upon Izuku's later confrontation with Equus Noctus, how they'd seen him on the verge of... what? Murder? Justice? At the time they'd thought they needed to stop him, but now the line between right and wrong suddenly seemed much thinner than they'd believed.

Sen Shoda's voice cut through the heavy silence like a blade through silk. "There's something else Kagutsuchi said that's been bothering me. He mentioned that Agito only manifest among the Quirkless—because Quirks aren't natural evolution."

The words hung in the air for a moment before their full weight crashed down on the group. Chairs creaked as students shifted uncomfortably, the implications spreading through their minds like poison through water.

"So you're saying," Kendo said slowly, her voice barely above a whisper, "that in a world where ninety percent of people have Quirks, only the ten percent who don't can become something that angels want to kill?"

"That's not justice," Reiko whispered, her usually steady voice cracking. "That's systematic elimination."

Tetsutetsu's hands clenched into fists on his desk. "So Midoriya and Aoyama—they're not just heroes in training. They're walking targets for beings we can't even comprehend, let alone fight."

The silence that followed was suffocating. Each student found themselves staring at their desks, their hands, anything but each other's faces, because looking would mean acknowledging the helplessness they all felt. Somewhere out there, two of their friends carried invisible marks that screamed 'kill me' to celestial beings, and despite all their training, all their Quirks, all their dreams of becoming heroes—they were powerless to help.

Ibara's vines had gone completely still, curled protectively around her shoulders. "How does one pray," she asked in a voice barely audible, "when the angels themselves might be the enemy?"

The afternoon sun slanted through the windows, casting long shadows across the classroom floor. But for Class 1-B, those shadows felt less like natural lighting and more like omens—dark fingers reaching toward a future none of them felt prepared to face.

The following morning at U.A. High School proceeded with the kind of manufactured normalcy that only comes after extraordinary events. Students shuffled through their regular classes with the glazed expressions of people trying to pretend their worldview hadn't been fundamentally altered in the span of twenty-four hours. Teachers droned through lesson plans, blissfully unaware that half their students were grappling with cosmic revelations that made quadratic equations seem laughably trivial.

It was into this carefully maintained facade of routine that trouble walked through the front doors of U.A.'s main building.

The man appeared unremarkable at first glance—average height, unremarkable build, dressed in what could generously be called "business casual" if one squinted and ignored the fact that his brown suit looked like it had been purchased from a discount store sometime in the 1970s. His hair was styled in a way that suggested either careful attention to a very unfortunate aesthetic, or complete indifference to modern fashion. Everything about him screamed "middle management" or "insurance adjuster."

Everything except his eyes.

Golden eyes that seemed to catch and hold light in ways that defied physics swept across the school's interior with the casual assessment of a predator evaluating territory. They were the only striking detail about him, burning with an intensity that made the air around him seem to shimmer slightly.

Security didn't stop him. In fact, security didn't seem to see him. He walked through the building with the kind of seamless passage that suggested reality was politely stepping aside to let him through. Students glanced past him without focus, teachers continued their conversations without interruption, and the various automated systems that should have detected an unauthorized visitor remained blissfully silent.

He made his way through the corridors with the confidence of someone who knew exactly where he was going, whistling a tune that sounded vaguely like elevator music crossed with a funeral dirge. His shoes clicked against the polished floors in a rhythm that seemed slightly off, as if he were marching to a beat no one else could hear.

The door to Principal Nezu's office stood before him, imposing in its solid wood construction and brass nameplate. He paused for a moment, straightened his bowtie with the care of someone preparing for an important business meeting, and knocked with the kind of sharp, authoritative rapping that suggested he was not accustomed to waiting for permission.

"Come in," came Nezu's voice from within, carrying its usual note of polite curiosity.

The man entered with a flourish that somehow managed to be both dramatic and completely ordinary, closing the door behind him with a soft click that seemed to carry more finality than it should have.

Principal Nezu looked up from his paperwork, his small form dwarfed by the executive chair that had been specially designed to accommodate his unique physiology. His dark eyes, sharp with intelligence that had earned him his position, took in the visitor with the kind of careful assessment that came from years of dealing with everything from concerned parents to government officials to the occasional villain trying to infiltrate his school.

But as his gaze met those burning golden eyes, Nezu's expression shifted subtly. Recognition flickered across his features—not of the individual, but of what the individual represented. The seamless passage through security, the otherworldly quality of those eyes, the way the man seemed to exist slightly apart from normal reality...

This was one of Kagutsuchi's fellow High Lords.

Nezu's small hands folded carefully on his desk, his voice maintaining its professional courtesy despite the sudden tension that had entered the room. "Good morning. May I ask what brings you to U.A. today?"

A smile began to form on the visitor's lips—slow, deliberate, and carrying all the warmth of a crocodile eyeing its next meal. When he spoke, his voice carried the nasal, distinctive cadence of someone who had perfected the art of making everything sound like a complaint about airline food.

"Hey, how ya doin'?" he said with exaggerated enthusiasm, extending a hand toward Nezu's diminutive form. "Me? I'm fine, thanks for askin', but anyway—" He grabbed Nezu's tiny paw in what was clearly meant to be a hearty handshake, pumping it with mechanical precision. "The name's Barachiel, and let me tell you, it is a pleasure to finally meet the famous Principal Nezu. Really, the pleasure's all mine. Well, mostly mine. Actually, entirely mine, now that I think about it."

Nezu managed to extract his hand from the enthusiastic greeting, his expression remaining diplomatically neutral despite the bizarre nature of the introduction. "I see. And what brings you to our school, Barachiel-san?"

"Oh, right, right, the reason I'm here," Barachiel said, snapping his fingers as if he'd nearly forgotten. He began pacing in front of Nezu's desk with the kind of manic energy that suggested he'd consumed far too much caffeine that morning. "See, there's this matter that came to my attention fairly recently, and I figured, hey, why not take a little field trip? Get out of the office, stretch the legs, maybe have a nice chat with the local authority figures."

He paused mid-pace, tapping his finger against his temple with exaggerated thoughtfulness. "Now what was it again? Oh, right!" His voice suddenly exploded into a volume that rattled the windows and probably sent several small animals running for cover. "MORTALS HAVE BEEN GETTING IN THE WAY OF MY GUYS JUST DOING THEIR JOBS! TWICE NOW! And whaddya know, the ones who keep stickin' their noses where they don't belong just happen to be deeply entwined with this whole circus you got going here!"

Nezu's ears twitched slightly at the volume, but his expression remained carefully controlled. "I see. And what exactly would you like us to do about this situation?"

Barachiel's smile widened, showing teeth that seemed just a little too sharp for comfort. "Oh, that's simple. Real simple. Elementary, you might say." He leaned forward, placing his hands on Nezu's desk with deliberate casualness. "I just want everyone here to understand that when one of my guys is trying to murder either the crybaby or the French wannabe, nobody gets any bright ideas about playing hero. Capisce?"

The words hung in the air like a physical presence. Nezu's small form remained perfectly still for a moment before he responded with the kind of polite firmness that had served him well in countless difficult negotiations.

"I'm afraid we can't comply with that request, Barachiel-san. Our obligations as heroes-in-training and as an educational institution require us to protect our students and innocent civilians."

Barachiel straightened up, his expression cycling through mock surprise before settling into exaggerated disappointment. "'Our obligations,'" he repeated, his voice taking on a sing-song quality as his hand gestured in the air as if he were conducting an invisible orchestra. "'As heroes-in-training.' 'Protect our students.'" His voice dropped back to its normal nasal tone. "Yeah, well, that's real tough turkey there, Principal. Real heartbreaking stuff."

He began pacing again, his movements becoming more agitated. "See, here's the thing—and I want you to pay attention to this part because it's important—unlike Michael over there," he jerked his thumb in what was presumably the direction of wherever Kagutsuchi was currently mopping floors, "I don't have time for any of that namby-pamby, let's-all-hold-hands-and-work-together kid stuff."

Barachiel stopped pacing and fixed Nezu with a stare that seemed to burn with inner fire. "So here's how this is gonna work. Either you make sure your little hero wannabes stay out of my way when business needs conducting, or..."

He hiked up his sleeve with theatrical deliberation, revealing an arm that seemed to contain more muscle than his slight frame should have been able to support. "There's gonna be trouble. And trust me when I tell you, Principal, you don't want the kind of trouble I specialize in."

The office fell silent except for the gentle hum of the air conditioning and the distant sounds of students going about their daily routines, completely unaware that their principal was currently being threatened by what amounted to middle management from the celestial bureaucracy.

Nezu's expression remained unchanged, his voice carrying the same polite professionalism it had maintained throughout the entire surreal encounter. "I appreciate you taking the time to visit us today, Barachiel-san. However, I'm afraid our position remains unchanged. We will continue to protect our students and fulfill our duties as heroes, regardless of any... complications that may arise."

Barachiel stared at him for a long moment, his golden eyes searching Nezu's face for any sign of wavering. Finding none, he let out a sound that was somewhere between a sigh and the noise a deflating balloon makes.

"Well," he said, straightening his bowtie again, "can't say I didn't try the diplomatic approach first." His smile returned, somehow managing to be even less reassuring than before. "Guess we'll just have to see how things play out, won't we?"

He turned toward the door with the same casual confidence he'd entered with, pausing just as his hand touched the handle. "Oh, and Principal? You might want to invest in some better insurance. You know, just in case."

And with that cheerful bit of advice, he opened the door and walked out, leaving behind only the faint scent of ozone and the distinct feeling that the morning had just taken a very sharp turn toward the catastrophic.

Nezu sat in his chair for several long minutes after the door closed, his small hands folded on his desk, his expression thoughtful. Finally, he reached for his phone and began dialing a number he'd hoped he wouldn't need to use quite so soon.

"Kagutsuchi-san? Yes, it's Nezu. I believe we need to talk."

The faculty meeting room felt smaller than usual that evening, despite being the same conference room they'd used for countless discussions about curriculum changes, student evaluations, and the occasional villain attack. The difference wasn't in the space itself, but in the weight of the conversation they were about to have.

Kagutsuchi sat at the head of the table, transformed from the humble custodian they'd grown accustomed to seeing. Gone were the simple work clothes and the ever-present mop and bucket. In their place was a perfectly tailored black suit that seemed to absorb light rather than reflect it, complete with a crisp white shirt and dark tie. The change was striking—where before he had seemed approachable, almost mundane despite his cosmic nature, now he carried himself with the kind of quiet authority that reminded everyone present exactly what he was.

The other faculty members arranged themselves around the table with varying degrees of comfort. Some, like Aizawa, looked as perpetually tired as ever, though there was a sharper edge to his attention. Others, particularly those who had been present for previous revelations about their custodian's true nature, wore expressions that mixed resignation with the kind of weary acceptance that came from realizing your life had officially moved beyond the realm of normal workplace problems.

"Right," Kagutsuchi began, his voice carrying a formality that matched his appearance. "I'm sure Principal Nezu has briefed you all on this morning's... visitor." He glanced around the table, noting the various expressions of concern, confusion, and in Present Mic's case, barely contained curiosity. "Barachiel's appearance here was not entirely unexpected, given recent events, but it does complicate our situation significantly."

Principal Nezu, looking even smaller than usual in his specially designed chair, nodded gravely. "Kagutsuchi-san has agreed to attempt diplomatic contact with his colleague. However, he's indicated that this may prove more challenging than our previous encounters."

"That," Kagutsuchi said with a slight grimace, "is putting it mildly. Barachiel is... let's say he has a different approach to problem-solving than most of us. Unlike Graviel, who at least operates within certain parameters of reason, Barachiel tends to be significantly more unreasonable when he wants something."

Instead of the fear or panic one might expect when discussing threats from celestial beings, the room filled with a collective sigh that spoke of pure, unadulterated exasperation. It was the sound of professionals who had dealt with difficult personalities before, even if those personalities had never previously been angels with anger management issues.

Present Mic leaned forward in his chair, his usual volume somewhat subdued but his expression animated with concern. "So what you're telling us is that this Barachiel guy isn't just gonna try to pick a fight with our students, is he? Because I gotta tell ya, we've had enough excitement this semester."

Kagutsuchi shrugged, a gesture that seemed oddly casual given his formal attire and the gravity of the situation. "That's certainly a possibility. Barachiel has been known to... escalate situations when he doesn't get his way. However, he's usually too busy with other assignments to commit to prolonged conflicts. I'm hoping I can talk some sense into him before things reach that point."

Vlad King, who had been quietly listening while absently organizing his papers, looked up with the kind of practical question that cut straight to the heart of their concerns. "Are there any of your fellow High Lords who are actually as friendly as you've been? Because if we're going to be dealing with more surprise visits, it would be nice to know if any of them might be willing to have a reasonable conversation."

Kagutsuchi's expression brightened slightly, as if the question had reminded him of something pleasant. "Actually, yes. Azrael is quite personable, all things considered. Very professional, excellent conversationalist, surprisingly good sense of humor."

The faculty members exchanged glances that suggested cautious optimism. Here, finally, was the prospect of dealing with a reasonable celestial authority figure.

"Of course," Kagutsuchi continued conversationally, "he was the one who carried out the death of the firstborn in Egypt, so 'friendly' is somewhat a matter of perspective when it comes to him."

The brief moment of relief that had settled over the room evaporated instantly, replaced by the kind of stunned silence that follows truly spectacular conversational whiplash.

Midnight blinked several times, as if trying to process what she'd just heard. "I'm sorry, did you just describe the Angel of Death as having a good sense of humor?"

"Oh, absolutely," Kagutsuchi replied with the casual tone of someone discussing a colleague's weekend hobbies. "Azrael has this wonderful dry wit. Very sophisticated. He's also quite knowledgeable about literature and has an extensive collection of vintage wines. Lovely dinner companion, really."

Aizawa's voice carried the flat, deadpan delivery that his students knew meant he was either about to say something devastatingly sarcastic or had given up on life entirely. "Right. So our options are the uncooperative middle manager or the charming genocidal sommelier."

"When you put it like that," Kagutsuchi said thoughtfully, "I can see how the situation might seem less than ideal."

Cementoss, who rarely spoke up in faculty meetings, raised one concrete hand tentatively. "Perhaps we should focus on preventive measures? Security protocols, evacuation procedures, that sort of thing?"

"An excellent suggestion," Principal Nezu agreed. "Though I suspect traditional security measures may prove... inadequate... against visitors of this nature."

Kagutsuchi nodded grimly. "Unfortunately, you're correct. The kind of beings we're potentially dealing with don't typically concern themselves with locked doors or alarm systems. However, I want to emphasize that I don't believe Barachiel intends to harm anyone directly. His complaint is specifically about interference with his agents' missions. If we can reach an understanding—or at least a temporary truce—it may buy us time to address the larger situation."

Snipe leaned back in his chair, his hat tilted at an angle that somehow conveyed skepticism. "And what exactly does this 'larger situation' look like from where you're sitting?"

The question hung in the air as Kagutsuchi considered his response carefully. When he spoke, his voice carried the weight of someone who had seen civilizations rise and fall, who understood the long game being played around them.

"The truth is, we're approaching a convergence point. The emergence of multiple Agito, the increased activity from the Lords, the growing awareness among your students of forces they were never meant to encounter—it's all building toward something. Whether that something is catastrophic or merely... complicated... depends largely on the choices we make in the coming weeks."

The faculty absorbed this information with the kind of grim acceptance that came from working at a school where students regularly fought villains and supernatural threats had somehow become part of the curriculum.

"Well," Present Mic said finally, his voice carrying forced cheer that fooled no one, "at least we know our job security is solid. I mean, where else are we gonna find this level of workplace excitement?"

Despite the gravity of the situation, several faculty members chuckled—the kind of gallows humor that had gotten them through countless crises before.

"I'll contact Barachiel tomorrow," Kagutsuchi said, straightening his tie with the air of someone preparing for an unpleasant but necessary task. "Hopefully, we can reach some sort of accommodation. In the meantime, I suggest we maintain normal operations but remain alert for any... unusual developments."

As the meeting began to wind down and faculty members started gathering their papers and preparing to leave, Aizawa's voice cut through the general rustling with a question that made everyone pause.

"Just out of curiosity," he said, fixing Kagutsuchi with a look that was equal parts tired and suspicious, "exactly how many of your colleagues should we be expecting to drop by for impromptu visits?"

Midnight looked up from her papers with a grimace. "There are seven High Lords total, right? So potentially five more surprise visits?"

Kagutsuchi nodded reluctantly. "That's... technically correct, yes."

The collective groan that rose from the assembled faculty was loud enough to rattle the windows and probably wake up anyone trying to sleep in the entire block. It was the sound of people realizing that their already complicated lives were about to become exponentially more so.

"Perfect," Midnight muttered, gathering her papers with sharp, decisive movements. "Just perfect. I'm updating my résumé tonight."

As the faculty filed out of the conference room, leaving behind only the lingering scent of Kagutsuchi's otherworldly presence and the distinct feeling that their definition of "normal school problems" had just been permanently redefined, one thought echoed in all their minds:

They definitely weren't paid enough for this.

Shinka Restaurant existed in one of Tokyo's quieter districts, the kind of establishment that catered to discerning clientele who valued privacy over publicity. From the outside, it appeared unremarkable—elegant but understated, with warm light spilling from windows that somehow managed to obscure the view of anyone trying to peer inside. The kind of place where important conversations happened over carefully prepared meals, away from prying eyes and recording devices.

What most patrons didn't realize was that Shinka was owned and operated by one of Kagutsuchi's Minor Lords, a being who had taken to the hospitality industry with the same meticulous attention to detail that had once been applied to maintaining cosmic balance. The restaurant's reputation for discretion wasn't just professional courtesy—it was supernatural guarantee.

Kagutsuchi sat at a corner table in a private dining room, his formal black suit making him blend seamlessly with the establishment's sophisticated atmosphere. The meal before him—an artfully arranged selection of seasonal specialties—remained largely untouched as he waited for his dinner companion to arrive. His expression carried the kind of resigned patience that came from centuries of dealing with difficult colleagues.

The door opened without fanfare, and Barachiel entered with the same casual confidence he'd displayed at U.A. His attire hadn't improved since the morning—the same discount suit, the same aggressively mundane appearance that somehow made his golden eyes seem even more unsettling by contrast. He surveyed the private dining room with the critical eye of someone evaluating real estate, then settled into the chair across from Kagutsuchi with a satisfied grunt.

"Nice place," he said, his nasal voice carrying its characteristic blend of complaint and approval. "Very... what's the word... atmospheric? Yeah, atmospheric. Like a funeral parlor, but with better lighting and more expensive dead fish."

A server appeared as if summoned by some invisible signal, placing a matching meal before Barachiel with the kind of practiced efficiency that suggested they were well-versed in serving unusual clientele. Barachiel barely glanced at the food before launching into conversation with the enthusiasm of someone who had been waiting all day to air his grievances.

"So!" he said, gesturing with his chopsticks in a way that made several pieces of carefully arranged sashimi dance dangerously close to the edge of his plate. "Here we are, just like old times. You, me, fancy food that costs more than most people's rent. Really takes me back to that little place in Babylon. Remember that? Right before the whole tower incident?"

Kagutsuchi's expression remained diplomatically neutral. "I remember. Though I believe we're here to discuss more recent developments."

"Right, right, recent developments," Barachiel repeated, his tone taking on the mocking quality of someone repeating a particularly stupid suggestion. "Let me tell you what's got me all worked up, Michael. See, I got this problem—a real Sophie's choice kind of situation. Either one of your precious Agito kids drops dead, or one of my subordinates does. And unlike some people I could mention, I actually keep score."

He paused to take a bite of his meal, chewing thoughtfully before continuing. "Now, call me old-fashioned, but I prefer it when my guys come back from their assignments with all their original parts intact. Makes for better employee morale, you know?"

Kagutsuchi set down his chopsticks with deliberate care, his dark eyes meeting Barachiel's golden ones across the table. "You know it's not that clear-cut. What's really bothering you?"

The question hung in the air for a moment before Barachiel's casual facade cracked slightly, revealing something harder and more frustrated underneath. He leaned back in his chair with an exasperated sigh that seemed to come from somewhere deep in his chest.

"You really want to know? Fine. I'm getting sick and tired of your soft approach to everything, that's what. These kids—Midoriya, Aoyama—they're problems waiting to happen, and you want to what, nurture them? Guide them? Hope they make good choices?" His voice rose slightly, taking on the sharp edge of genuine annoyance. "I want to nip this whole situation in the bud before they start being real trouble."

He leaned forward, his golden eyes burning with intensity. "You think I haven't been keeping tabs on those kids? We almost had a crisis with Tsugami back in the day, and now you're raising two more to do the exact same thing? What's next, Michael? You gonna start a whole academy for potential world-enders?"

Kagutsuchi's response was immediate and firm. "They're good kids, Barachiel. Both of them. If you'd actually observe them instead of just tracking their power levels, you'd see—"

"Good kids!" Barachiel interrupted with a bark of laughter that contained absolutely no humor. "Oh, that's rich! Good kids, sure. Just like every other country brat with a dream and a chip on their shoulder. Right up until reality hits them in the face and suddenly they're snorting coke and robbing convenience stores once the hero gigs dry up."

The casual cruelty of the statement hung between them like a physical presence. Kagutsuchi's expression darkened, his voice taking on an edge that reminded anyone listening that beneath his gentle demeanor lay something far more dangerous.

"You know humans aren't that simple."

Barachiel's smile widened, showing teeth that seemed just a little too sharp. "Oh, I know exactly how simple they are. And I also know how complicated they can get, which makes them dangerous when you put them in a situation where survival becomes the highest priority. You want to know what happens when good kids get pushed to their breaking point? Ask the survivors of every civilization that thought they could handle their own monsters."

The silence that followed was heavy with unspoken history, the weight of countless civilizations that had risen and fallen under their watch. Both beings had seen the pattern repeat itself across millennia—hope turning to desperation, heroes becoming villains, good intentions paving roads to very real hells.

Finally, Barachiel let out a long, theatrical sigh that seemed to deflate his entire body. He slumped in his chair like a punctured balloon, his golden eyes losing some of their predatory intensity.

"But you know what? Fine. Fine! I'll lay off your precious little heroes-in-training. Consider it a professional courtesy." He paused, a genuine smile—the first one of the evening—crossing his features. "Besides, I still owe you for directing me in that lead role as Marty McFly. Best three weeks of my existence, hands down. Really got to explore the human condition through the lens of temporal displacement and family dysfunction."

Kagutsuchi blinked, his serious expression cracking slightly. "I'm sorry, what?"

"The company production, 1987," Barachiel explained with the pride of someone recounting a career-defining moment. "Back to the Future: The Musical. You directed it, remember? I brought a real authenticity to the role, you know? The whole fish-out-of-water thing, the confusion about customs, the desperate need to fix everything before reality collapses around you. Method acting at its finest."

"You're bringing up the heavenly theater company."

"Hey, don't knock your own directing. Great way to study human behavior, and you really brought out my range as a performer. Plus, the cast parties were legendary." Barachiel returned to his meal with renewed enthusiasm. "So yeah, consider your kids safe. For now. But if either of them starts showing signs of going full Tsugami on us, all bets are off."

Kagutsuchi nodded slowly, recognizing both the concession and the implicit threat contained within it. "I appreciate your... restraint."

"Don't mention it. Really. Don't mention it to anyone, because I have a reputation to maintain." Barachiel raised his sake cup in a mock toast. "Here's to old friends, bad decisions, and the faint hope that this time might be different."

As they clinked cups across the table, both beings understood that they had just negotiated a temporary truce in a conflict that had been brewing for centuries. Whether that truce would hold long enough to matter remained to be seen.

Outside Shinka Restaurant, Tokyo continued its nightly rhythm, completely unaware that the fate of two teenage boys had just been decided over dinner and sake by beings old enough to remember when the city was nothing but rice fields and fishing villages.

The conversation continued late into the evening, old colleagues catching up on cosmic gossip and sharing war stories that spanned millennia. But beneath the casual banter lay the understanding that they were playing a game whose stakes grew higher with each passing day, and that the next move belonged to forces neither of them could fully control.

By the time they parted ways, both had gained a clearer picture of the challenges ahead. The question now was whether good intentions and temporary truces would be enough to prevent the kind of catastrophe that had claimed civilizations before—or whether history was simply preparing to repeat itself with new players in familiar roles.

The faculty meeting the next morning carried a distinctly different atmosphere from the tense gathering of the previous evening. Where before there had been uncertainty and barely contained anxiety, now there was something approaching cautious optimism. The conference room felt lighter somehow, as if a storm that had been threatening on the horizon had finally moved on to trouble someone else.

Kagutsuchi, once again dressed in his formal black suit, sat at the head of the table with an expression that could almost be described as satisfied. The kind of look that came from successfully navigating a particularly treacherous diplomatic minefield without stepping on anything that might explode.

"I'm pleased to report that my dinner meeting with Barachiel was... productive," he began, his voice carrying the careful neutrality of someone delivering good news while trying not to jinx it. "We've reached an understanding regarding the current situation with our students."

The collective sigh of relief that rose from the assembled faculty was audible enough to rattle the windows. Several teachers visibly slumped in their chairs, the tension they'd been carrying since yesterday's revelations finally beginning to ease.

Principal Nezu leaned forward in his specially designed chair, his small hands folded with renewed composure. "I take it he's agreed to call off his... enforcement efforts?"

"For the time being, yes," Kagutsuchi confirmed. "Barachiel has agreed to suspend any direct action against Midoriya and Aoyama, provided they continue to develop along positive trajectories. It's a temporary truce, but it should give us the breathing room we need to address the larger situation."

Midnight let out a laugh that bordered on the hysterical, the sound of someone who had been preparing for the worst and instead received an unexpected reprieve. "Thank god. I was already mentally updating my will. Do you have any idea how complicated it is to explain to a lawyer why you need provisions for death by celestial intervention?"

"I'm just relieved we don't have to evacuate the school," Vlad King added, unconsciously straightening papers that were already perfectly aligned. "The logistics alone would have been a nightmare."

Cementoss nodded gravely from his position near the wall. "The structural reinforcements I was calculating would have taken weeks to implement properly. And that's assuming conventional defenses would have been effective against... well, whatever we might have been facing."

Kagutsuchi's expression grew more serious, though he maintained his diplomatic composure. "I want to emphasize that this resolution, while positive, shouldn't be taken lightly. The situation could have escalated into something truly volatile if negotiations had failed."

Present Mic, who had been unusually subdued throughout the meeting, suddenly snorted with the kind of dismissive laughter that suggested his nervous energy was finally finding an outlet. "Come on, though—what's the absolute worst this Barachiel guy could have done? Mount a full-scale invasion of U.A. in broad daylight?"

The words hung in the air for a moment before their casual tone registered with everyone present. It was meant to be rhetorical, the kind of exaggerated scenario designed to highlight how much they'd been overreacting to what was, fundamentally, a workplace dispute with unusual participants.

The silence that followed was not the comfortable quiet of a question answered, but the profound, heavy silence that comes when someone accidentally stumbles onto a truth they really didn't want to discover.

Kagutsuchi's expression remained carefully neutral, but his lack of immediate denial spoke volumes. His eyes found a fascinating spot on the conference table that apparently required his complete attention, and his hands folded with the kind of deliberate precision that suggested he was working very hard not to say something.

The silence stretched on. And on. And on.

Present Mic's grin faded as the implications of that silence began to sink in. His voice, when he finally spoke, had lost all of its characteristic volume and energy, replaced by a kind of strangled whisper.

"Oh. Oh no. Oh, that's... that's actually something he could have done, isn't it?"

More silence.

"Someone please tell me I'm overreacting. Someone please tell me that the guy who threatened our principal yesterday couldn't actually have staged a full military assault on our school."

The silence was becoming oppressive now, filling the room like a physical presence that made breathing feel difficult.

Present Mic looked around the table with growing desperation, his usual animated gestures reduced to helpless hand-waving. "I... I think I need someone to punch me in the face right now. Just to make sure I'm still living in reality and not having some kind of stress-induced nightmare about my job."

"I volunteer," Aizawa said immediately from his position in the corner, his voice carrying the flat, matter-of-fact tone of someone making a perfectly reasonable offer to perform a public service.

"Noted and appreciated," Present Mic replied weakly, slumping in his chair like a deflated balloon. "But maybe let's hold off until I finish processing the fact that we apparently just avoided a scenario that makes every villain attack we've ever faced look like a minor disciplinary issue."

Principal Nezu cleared his throat with the kind of diplomatic delicacy that suggested he was about to attempt damage control on a conversation that had spiraled well beyond anyone's comfort zone.

"Perhaps," he said carefully, "we should focus on the positive outcome rather than dwelling on hypothetical scenarios that, thankfully, we won't need to address."

Kagutsuchi finally looked up from his intense study of the table, his expression carrying the weary acceptance of someone who had hoped to avoid this particular revelation. "Principal Nezu is correct. The important thing is that we've successfully resolved the immediate crisis through dialogue rather than... alternative approaches."

"Alternative approaches," Midnight repeated slowly, as if testing the euphemism for structural integrity. "Is that what we're calling potential divine warfare now?"

"I prefer 'diplomatic alternatives,'" Kagutsuchi replied with the kind of careful precision that suggested this was not the first time he'd had to navigate the delicate art of threat assessment with concerned civilians.

The meeting continued for another twenty minutes, but the easy relief that had characterized its beginning had been replaced by a more complex mixture of gratitude and dawning realization. They had successfully avoided a crisis, yes—but they were also beginning to understand just how catastrophic that crisis could have been.

As faculty members began to file out of the conference room, their conversations carried a different tone than usual. There was still relief, certainly, but it was tempered by the kind of sobering awareness that comes from learning you've been standing much closer to the edge of a cliff than you'd realized.

Present Mic lingered near the door, still looking slightly shell-shocked by the implications of his own rhetorical question. "You know," he said to no one in particular, "I think I liked it better when our biggest problems were villain attacks and budget meetings."

Aizawa paused beside him, his expression carrying a hint of what might charitably be called sympathy. "The offer to punch you is still on the table."

"Thanks, Shota. I'll keep that in mind."

As the last of the faculty departed, leaving Kagutsuchi alone in the conference room with his thoughts and the lingering weight of revelations that couldn't be taken back, one thing had become clear: their definition of "crisis averted" was going to need some serious recalibration.