The room remained steeped in a suffocating silence, broken only by Nana Shimura's ragged breaths and the distant, cheerful hum of the Izakaya. Her hands, still clenched into fists, trembled uncontrollably, and tears streamed freely down her face, blurring the faces of those around her. The revelation of Tenko's survival and, worse, his corruption by All For One, was a wound ripped open anew, far more agonizing than any physical injury.

"My... my Tenko..." Nana finally choked out, her voice raw with despair, barely a whisper. She looked up, her tear-filled eyes, usually vibrant with determination, now pleaded with Kagutsuchi. "What... what can be done? Can he be saved? There must be something! He's just a child, my grandson! He can't... he can't be lost to that monster!" Her voice rose with a desperate, fragile hope, clinging to the faintest possibility.

Kagutsuchi, however, remained utterly unperturbed. He met Nana's gaze with a flat, almost clinical expression, devoid of the playful amusement he often displayed. He set his sake cup down with a soft clink, the sound unnaturally loud in the tense silence.

"Nana Shimura," Kagutsuchi stated, his voice calm, yet each word landed with the crushing weight of undeniable truth. "You know full well what All For One is capable of. You fought him. You know how he operates. How he twists, how he corrupts, how he grooms. Do you truly believe that after years, perhaps even decades, under his sway, your grandson, Tenko Shimura, would still be an innocent child? Do you truly believe that once you see him, he won't just be swayed by the monster who has raised him?"

Nana flinched as if struck, her head snapping back slightly. The brutal honesty of his words, though cruel in their delivery, resonated with a horrifying truth she had long suppressed. She knew. She knew the depths of All For One's depravity, the insidious nature of his influence. The hope, fragile as it was, began to crumble, replaced by a cold, sickening dread.

"But... but there has to be something!" Izuku burst out, unable to contain himself any longer. He had been listening, his heart aching for Nana, his mind reeling from the horror of a grandson twisted by ultimate evil. He didn't understand the full context of All For One's power or his history with Nana, but the raw pain in her voice, the sheer injustice of it, propelled him forward. "He's her family! No one should be left behind! We have to try! There must be a way to reach him, to save him from All For One's influence!" His voice was earnest, filled with a pure, unadulterated belief in the possibility of redemption, a belief born from his own unwavering heroic spirit.

The Vestiges, however, reacted with a grim, knowing silence. Yoichi Shigaraki, his gentle features twisted in a pained grimace, closed his eyes for a moment, remembering the suffocating weight of All For One's very existence, the way his brother had twisted and consumed everything he touched. He knew, with a chilling certainty, that Kagutsuchi was right.

Kudo's hardened expression softened with a rare flicker of empathy for Nana, but his gaze remained fixed on Izuku, a silent warning in his eyes. Bruce's eyes narrowed, a grim understanding passing between him and Hikage, who merely sighed, a tired, knowing sorrow on his face. Daigoro's boisterousness was completely extinguished, replaced by a stunned, somber silence.

En Tayutai, ever the quiet observer, finally spoke, his voice low and grave, cutting through Izuku's desperate plea. "Young Midoriya," he began, his gaze fixed on the boy, "you do not know All For One as we do. He is not merely a villain who takes Quirks. He takes souls. He twists minds. He preys on weakness, on despair, on loneliness. He would have done everything in his power to groom young Tenko, to break him down and rebuild him in his own image. If not as his ideal successor, then as a loyal, unquestioning pawn."

En paused, his eyes, usually so mild, now holding a chilling intensity. "People under his sway rarely, if at all, defect. His control is absolute. He is that dangerous. To believe that a child, raised by such a monster, could simply be 'swayed' back... it is a long shot, young man. A very, very long shot."

The unspoken weight of their collective experience, their shared trauma at the hands of All For One, hung heavy in the air, a stark counterpoint to Izuku's youthful optimism. Nana, listening to En's words, felt the last vestiges of her hope drain away, replaced by a profound, soul-crushing despair. Her grandson. Lost. Forever.

The heavy silence that had fallen over the tatami room after Nana's heartbroken realization lingered, a somber counterpoint to the distant sounds of the Izakaya. Kagutsuchi, seemingly unaffected by the raw emotion, calmly picked up another skewer of grilled chicken, his dark eyes sweeping over the distraught Nana, the pleading Izuku, and the grim-faced Vestiges.

"Now that we've had our little emotional interlude," Kagutsuchi stated, his voice flat and devoid of sympathy, "let's return to the matter at hand. My offer still stands. I will help train Izuku Midoriya to better control his powers. To understand what it truly means to be Agito. To embrace both the Light and the Darkness within him, and to wield it for a purpose yet unknown." He took a bite of chicken, chewing slowly.

Toshinori, his jaw still tight with a mixture of fury and despair over Nana's pain, finally found his voice. "And what exactly does this 'training' entail?" he demanded, his voice low and dangerous. "And what are your 'conditions'?"

Kagutsuchi swallowed, then wiped his lips with a napkin. "The training will be simple control exercises, of course. The boy must first learn how to transform willingly, and not just unconsciously. We'll go from there and see what he's made of. As for conditions, there is one paramount rule: If a Lord has him in their sights, I am not obliged to interfere."

Toshinori's eyes widened, a fresh wave of outrage washing over him. "What?! That's preposterous! You just said you would guide him! You would protect him! How can you stand by and let him be attacked, especially by one of your own kind?!" His voice rose, laced with furious disbelief. "There must be a way to talk a Lord out of it! To negotiate, to reason!"

Kagutsuchi merely raised an eyebrow, his smirk widening into something almost mocking. "Talk a Lord out of it?" he scoffed, a dry, humorless chuckle escaping him. "Toshinori Yagi, you truly are naive. We operate under a non-compete clause. Once a Lord has a set goal, once they have chosen their target, neither of us are supposed to interfere with each other. It maintains a certain... cosmic decorum, you see. It prevents unnecessary squabbles among the divine." He shrugged, utterly unconcerned. "It's a rule. And I, unlike some of my brethren, adhere to the rules."

Toshitsugu Kudo, who had been listening with growing suspicion, finally grunted, his arms crossed, his eyes narrowed. "You're just leading us on," he accused, his voice a low, cynical rumble. "You're playing some kind of twisted game, trying to get us to agree to something you'll twist later. You're not to be trusted."

Kagutsuchi's gaze snapped to Kudo, a flicker of something cold and sharp in his dark eyes. His smile remained, but it seemed to lose all warmth, becoming a thin, menacing line. "Second User," he stated, his voice calm, yet each word resonated with an unnerving finality, "I cannot lie. I have told you this repeatedly. What I say is the truth, and nothing else. My intentions, my limitations, my purpose – all of it, laid bare. If you choose not to believe it, that is your prerogative. But it does not change the reality of the situation." He paused, his gaze sweeping over all of them, a silent challenge in his eyes. "The choice, as I said, is yours. But the clock is ticking, and the universe, unlike you mortals, does not wait for indecision."

The air in the tatami room remained thick with unspoken doubts, the silence punctuated only by the distant clatter of dishes from the main Izakaya. Toshinori, Naomasa, and the Vestiges exchanged uneasy glances, each weighing Kagutsuchi's chilling conditions against the desperate need for answers and control over Izuku's terrifying new power. The idea of allowing Izuku to face a "Lord" without interference, or to be a pawn in a cosmic game, was anathema to their heroic instincts.

Toshinori's gaze swept over the faces of his predecessors. He saw Yoichi's deep concern, Kudo's hardened skepticism, Bruce's thoughtful frown, Hikage's weary resignation, Banjo's subdued contemplation, and En's quiet, assessing stare. Finally, his eyes settled on Nana, whose face was still streaked with tears, a profound sorrow etched into her features. Her gaze, however, held a flicker of the unwavering resolve he knew so well.

He closed his eyes for a long moment, taking a deep, shuddering breath. The weight of his own restored strength, the impossible miracle Kagutsuchi had wrought, pressed down on him. He opened his eyes, and a new, steely determination shone within them. He met the gaze of each Vestige in turn, a silent conversation passing between them – a shared understanding of the impossible choice, and the necessity of it.

"Very well," Toshinori finally said, his voice low, but firm, cutting through the silence. He looked directly at Kagutsuchi, his expression grim. "We accept. Up to a point." His jaw tightened. "But be warned, Kagutsuchi-san. We will be watching you. Every move. And we will keep you close. If you deviate from your stated purpose, if you put Young Midoriya in undue harm, or if you attempt to twist this arrangement for your own nefarious ends... we will find a way to stop you. Even if it means fighting a 'divine herald'."

Kagutsuchi merely chuckled, a dry, amused sound that held no genuine warmth. He offered a faint, almost dismissive wave of his hand. "Oh, I assure you, Toshinori. You've got that part secured." His dark eyes glinted with a knowing amusement, a cryptic hint that left the others uneasy.

The conversation seemed to conclude, and slowly, tentatively, the group returned to their meal. The aroma of grilled skewers and simmering broth once again filled the air, but the conviviality was gone, replaced by a strained quiet. Toshinori, though accepting the agreement, found it hard to truly relax. Naomasa ate mechanically, his mind clearly still reeling. The Vestiges, too, picked at their food, their earlier excitement replaced by a somber reflection on the cosmic stakes now laid bare.

Nana, however, could barely touch her food. Her gaze was distant, fixed on some unseen horror, her hands still trembling in her lap. The image of Tenko, her sweet grandson, now twisted by All For One, haunted her. A fresh wave of tears welled in her eyes, blurring the edges of the room. The pain was unbearable, a physical ache in her chest.

Toshinori, seeing her distress, gently placed his hand over hers, his touch warm and reassuring. "Nana," he said softly, his voice filled with profound empathy. "Don't give up. Not yet." He squeezed her hand, his gaze firm and unwavering. "We'll figure out a way. Somehow. To get Tenko out of All For One's grasp. We will."

Nana looked at him, her eyes wide and tearful, a flicker of fragile hope igniting in their depths. She nodded, clinging to his words as if they were a lifeline.

Kagutsuchi, observing the exchange from across the table, merely sighed internally, a faint, almost resigned expression touching his lips. He took another bite of chicken, his dark eyes unreadable, the cosmic game continuing, oblivious to the fleeting hopes of mortals.

With everyone finally satisfied, the last remnants of the meal lay on the low table, a stark contrast to the profound shift in atmosphere. Kagutsuchi, having finished his own food, leaned back, his dark eyes sweeping over the assembled Vestiges, a faint, almost imperceptible sigh escaping him.

"Alright, everyone," Kagutsuchi announced, his voice calm, yet carrying an undeniable authority that cut through the lingering quiet. "The fun's over. My time here is drawing to a close, and frankly, I'm already close to breaking a universal law. The dead, as you know, must no longer be among the living. This temporary reprieve was a significant strain on the natural order."

Daigoro Banjo let out a wistful sigh, his usual boisterous energy replaced by a genuine sadness. "Aw, man, already?" he grumbled, running a hand over his bald head. "It was fun while it lasted, though! Real food, real beer, and seeing Toshinori all healed up... that was something else."

En Tayutai, ever the quiet observer, patted Daigoro gently on the shoulder. "At least we got to experience it, Banjo," he murmured, his voice soft. "A chance many would never dream of."

Yoichi Shigaraki, his gentle features now etched with a serious resolve, turned his gaze to Toshinori. His eyes, though kind, held a fierce intensity. "Toshinori," he began, his voice clear and resonant, "if my brother is indeed alive, then you must no longer hold back. For too long, that man has been allowed to cause untold misery, to twist lives and shatter hope. It's high time that we put an actual, definitive stop to his madness. For all of us. For the future."

Toshinori met his gaze, a powerful nod confirming his understanding. His newly restored body pulsed with a vibrant strength he hadn't felt in years. "I vow it, First User," he said, his voice deep with conviction. "With this new strength, I just might. And if not," his gaze flickered to Izuku, "then my successor will."

Kagutsuchi chuckled, a dry, amused sound. "Oh, Toshinori," he interjected playfully, a knowing glint in his dark eyes. "A gentle reminder: Izuku is not eligible to inherit One For All. So, you might as well settle for the kid Mirai's been grooming. He's quite promising, I hear."

Toshinori bristled, a muscle twitching in his jaw. "Of course, you know about that," he muttered, a hint of annoyance in his tone. Despite his irritation, he turned to Izuku, his expression softening. "Young Midoriya," he asked, his voice gentle, "is that alright? For me to seek out another successor for One For All, even as you embark on your own path?"

Izuku, who had been listening intently, a thoughtful expression on his face, looked up at Toshinori. A small, resolute smile touched his lips. "Yes, All Might," he said, his voice clear and firm. "That's perfectly alright. I'll make do with my power as an Agito. That's more than enough. I'll find my own way to be a hero."

Toshinori's gaze softened further, a profound pride in his eyes. He then turned to Nana, the two sharing a long, silent look. Decades of unspoken grief, of sacrifice, of a legacy passed on with a heavy heart, passed between them in that single, shared moment. The weight of it lifted, replaced by a sense of peace, a profound closure that both had longed for.

Nana's eyes, though still tear-rimmed, now shone with a fierce love and unwavering support. "You will no longer feel alone, Toshinori," she vowed, her voice thick with emotion. "You will have us. All of us. Behind you, every step of the way."

Toshinori's smile widened, warm and genuine, and he pulled her into a tight, heartfelt embrace. "Thank you, Nana," he murmured into her hair, his voice choking with emotion. "Thank you."

Nana then pulled back slightly, her gaze turning to Izuku. Her eyes, filled with a maternal warmth, drew him into a gentle hug, one hand coming to rest on his unruly green hair. "And you, Izuku-kun," she said softly, her voice filled with encouragement. "Do your best. We are all with you as well. Every single one of us."

Izuku, overwhelmed by the warmth and acceptance, buried his face in her shoulder, a fresh wave of tears, this time of profound gratitude, welling in his eyes. He nodded, unable to speak, but his heart swelling with a newfound sense of belonging and purpose.

Then, with a soft, almost imperceptible hum, the air around the Vestiges began to shimmer. It started as a faint distortion, like heat haze, then intensified, becoming a gentle, golden light that enveloped each of them. Their forms, though still solid, seemed to soften at the edges, becoming ethereal, translucent.

Daigoro let out a final, booming laugh, a sound of pure joy. "See ya around, folks!" he called out, waving broadly. En offered a quiet, knowing smile. Kudo gave a curt nod, a rare hint of warmth in his eyes. Bruce and Hikage offered silent, respectful farewells. Yoichi, his gentle gaze lingering on Toshinori and Izuku, offered a small, serene smile, a silent blessing.

Nana, her eyes shining, gave Toshinori one last, lingering squeeze of his hand. "Go, Toshinori," she whispered, her voice filled with love and pride. "Be the Symbol of Peace. And remember, you're never truly alone." She then turned to Izuku, her maternal smile unwavering. "Do your best, Izuku-kun. We're all rooting for you." With a final, loving wave, she too began to fade, dissolving into the golden light.

One by one, the seven figures vanished, their forms dissipating into shimmering motes of light that drifted upwards, through the ceiling of the Izakaya, and into the vast, unseen beyond. The room, which had felt so full moments before, now seemed eerily quiet, the space the Vestiges had occupied feeling hollow. As the last of the golden light faded, Toshinori felt a strange, profound sensation bloom within him. It wasn't physical, not like the healing of his injury, but something deeper, more resonant. He instinctively placed a hand on his chest, over his heart, a bewildered expression on his face. He closed his eyes, a hesitant question forming in his mind.

'Nana? Are you... are you still there? All of you?' he mentally whispered, a fragile hope in his thought.

And then, clear as a bell, a voice resonated within his mind, warm and strong, unmistakably Nana's. 'Yes, Toshinori. We are here. Always.'

A wave of overwhelming relief, of profound peace, washed over him. He was no longer truly alone. The weight of his legacy, which had once felt so solitary, was now shared. A genuine, unburdened smile spread across his face, and he let out a soft, almost reverent sigh. He opened his eyes, a new light shining within them. He was ready.

With a sharp, decisive clap! that echoed loudly in the suddenly quiet room, Kagutsuchi drew the attention of Toshinori, Izuku, and Naomasa. He beamed, his dark eyes twinkling with a mischievous delight.

"Alright, everyone!" Kagutsuchi announced, his voice cheerful, almost sing-song. "Gather 'round! Over here, by the corner of the table. Huddle up, huddle up!" He gestured expansively towards the far corner of the low, lacquered table, his smile unwavering.

Toshinori, still basking in the profound peace of his internal reunion with the Vestiges, blinked, then looked at Kagutsuchi with a puzzled expression. Naomasa, ever cautious, narrowed his eyes, his professional instincts immediately on alert. Izuku, still a little teary-eyed but now filled with a newfound sense of purpose, simply stared, bewildered.

"Why?" Naomasa asked, his voice laced with suspicion.

Kagutsuchi merely waved a dismissive hand. "Oh, nothing dangerous, Detective, I assure you! Just a little something for posterity! Come on, don't be shy. Just stand together, by the corner. Face that way!" He pointed towards the wall, his smile growing wider.

Suspicious but with no real choice, the three slowly moved, shuffling awkwardly by the edge of the table, facing the corner as instructed. Toshinori, still feeling a bit foolish, leaned in slightly towards Kagutsuchi.

"Um, Kagutsuchi-san," Toshinori began, a slight, awkward chuckle escaping him. "What exactly are we supposed to be looking at?"

Before he could finish, Kagutsuchi, with a sudden, swift movement, wrapped an arm around Toshinori's waist, pulling him close. Almost simultaneously, his other arm snaked around Izuku and Naomasa, drawing them all into a tight, almost suffocating group hug. Kagutsuchi beamed, his face alight with pure, unadulterated glee, his eyes sparkling.

"Smile, everyone!" he declared in a loud, gleeful voice, his grip firm.

Toshinori, Naomasa, and Izuku could only stare, their mouths agape, their faces contorted in a mixture of complete confusion, bewildered surprise, and utter, open-mouthed bafflement.

Naomasa, still caught in Kagutsuchi's unyielding embrace, squinted his eyes, trying to focus past the man's beaming face. His gaze, ever analytical, drifted to the corner of the wooden paneling they were facing. There, almost imperceptibly, something shimmered, a faint, metallic glint reflecting the soft light of the lanterns. His brow furrowed.

"Toshinori..." Naomasa murmured, his voice a strained whisper, his eyes fixed on the anomaly. "There's..."

Meanwhile, within the confines of the UA faculty room, the scene of them staring at the hidden camera was being watched by the entire UA faculty. A large, sleek tablet, propped on a stand at the head of the conference table, displayed the live feed from the Izakaya. Nezu, the principal, sat at the head, a wide, knowing smile on his furry face, his paws steepled beneath his chin.

Around the table, the other Pro Heroes and staff were locked on, their expressions a fascinating mix. Shota Aizawa, slumped in his chair, his capture weapon draped over his shoulders, had his usual tired glare fixed on the screen, but a faint, almost imperceptible twitch at the corner of his mouth suggested he was fighting a losing battle against amusement. Nemuri Kayama, Midnight, leaned forward, a hand pressed to her lips, her eyes wide with a mix of shock and suppressed laughter. Hizashi Yamada, Present Mic, suddenly burst out laughing, a booming, unrestrained sound that filled the room, making a few empty coffee cups rattle. He slapped his knee repeatedly, tears streaming down his face as he pointed at Toshinori's bewildered expression on the screen.

"Oh my god! Look at his face! Toshinori, you old fool!" Hizashi roared, wiping his eyes. "He looks like a startled goldfish!"

Higari Maijima, Power Loader, grunted, a low, rumbling sound, his arms crossed. "Hmph. Serves him right for getting involved with that... Kagutsuchi character. Still, the kid's reaction is priceless."

Chiyo Shuzenji, Recovery Girl, shook her head, a soft, exasperated sigh escaping her. "Honestly, Toshinori. Always finding himself in the most ridiculous situations. Though I must admit," she added, a faint, fond smile touching her lips, "it's good to see him looking so... healthy again." Her gaze lingered on Toshinori's restored form on the tablet.

Anan Kurose, Thirteen, tilted her head, her helmet obscuring her expression, but the slight tremor in her posture indicated suppressed mirth. Ryo Inui, Hound Dog, let out a low, guttural chuckle, a sound that was more bark than laugh, his canine features contorted in amusement. Snipe, his wide-brimmed hat casting a shadow over his face, merely adjusted his mask, but the subtle shake of his shoulders betrayed his own silent amusement. The entire room, despite the seriousness of the situation, was united in their shared, undignified mirth at the expense of the Symbol of Peace.

Aizawa let out a long, weary sigh, running a hand through his perpetually messy hair. "I already hate him," he muttered, his gaze still fixed on Kagutsuchi's beaming face on the screen.

Nemuri, however, tilted her head, a thoughtful finger tapping her chin. "Hmm, I don't know, Eraser," she mused, a playful glint in her eyes. "He's kind of cute, in a chaotic, unsettling sort of way."

Aizawa rolled his eyes so hard they almost disappeared into his skull. "You would," he grumbled, a hint of exasperation in his tone.

Nezu, meanwhile, remained silent, his smile never wavering, even as the laughter and comments filled the room. His bright, intelligent eyes, however, were not simply observing the comical scene on the tablet. They were calculating, analyzing, and connecting an intricate web of information. Kagutsuchi. An entity claiming to be an 'angel,' capable of defying known physical laws, healing All Might's catastrophic injury, and materializing the vestiges of One For All. And then there was Midoriya Izuku, the boy at the center of it all, now revealed as an 'Agito,' a 'nascent deity' with limitless potential. The implications were staggering, threatening to rewrite the very understanding of Quirks, evolution, and even reality itself.

His paws, still steepled, tapped rhythmically. This wasn't merely a new powerful individual; this was a paradigm shift. A wild card of cosmic proportions. Kagutsuchi's casual mention of 'factions' among his kind, of 'maintaining order' versus 'chaos,' and his seemingly bored, yet deeply strategic, interest in Izuku, painted a complex, dangerous picture. UA's role, indeed, the entire hero society's role, would have to adapt. They were no longer just fighting villains; they were now, unwittingly, players in a divine game.

Nezu's smile widened, a thin, almost predatory curve. This was a challenge unlike any he had ever faced. A puzzle of unimaginable complexity. He would need to observe, to learn, to deduce Kagutsuchi's true motives and limitations. And, most importantly, he would need to ensure young Midoriya's safety and guide his development, not just as a hero, but as a being of immense, universal significance. The boy's potential, if properly nurtured, could be the key to a new era, or, if mismanaged, the catalyst for unimaginable destruction.

"Fascinating," Nezu finally murmured, his voice a low, thoughtful purr, almost too quiet to be heard over Hizashi's lingering guffaws. His eyes, fixed on the frozen image of their bewildered Symbol of Peace, gleamed with a chilling blend of intellectual excitement and strategic resolve. "Absolutely fascinating. This requires a delicate touch. A very, very delicate touch indeed."

Outside the Izakaya, the cool night air was a welcome balm after the intense revelations within. Toshinori, Izuku, and Naomasa stood by the entrance, the last echoes of Kagutsuchi's unsettling cheer fading into the bustling city sounds. Izuku still looked a little dazed, while Toshinori and Naomasa exchanged a weary, bewildered glance.

Suddenly, the familiar squeal of tires cut through the quiet. A taxi, bright yellow against the darkening street, screeched to a halt just in front of them. Before the driver could even fully stop, the back door burst open.

From within, a figure launched herself out, a blur of frantic movement. It was Midoriya Inko, her face streaked with tears, her hair disheveled, and her eyes wide with a mixture of terror and overwhelming relief. She wore a simple house dress, as if she had rushed out the door at a moment's notice.

"IZUKU!" she shrieked, her voice raw with a hysterical, unbridled emotion that turned heads on the street.

Izuku, still somewhat bewildered by the recent events, blinked, his eyes widening as his mother, a force of pure maternal panic, hurtled towards him. He barely had time to register her presence before she slammed into him, enveloping him in a fierce, bone-crushing hug that lifted him slightly off his feet.

"Oh, my baby! My poor Izuku! Are you alright?! Are you hurt anywhere?! They said... they said you were with All Might! And then the detective called! I was so worried!" Inko sobbed hysterically into his shoulder, her words a frantic, tear-filled torrent.

Izuku, completely caught off guard by the sudden onslaught of his mother's worry, could only pat her back awkwardly, his own eyes wide with a mix of surprise and a familiar, slightly embarrassed affection. "M-Mom? I'm okay! Really! I'm fine!" he mumbled, muffled by her embrace.

Naomasa, standing a few feet away, offered a faint, almost apologetic smile. He had indeed called Inko shortly after Kagutsuchi's 'contract' discussion, knowing that a mother's presence would be crucial after such a day, and perhaps, a useful distraction. He hadn't, however, anticipated quite this level of emotional intensity. Toshinori, meanwhile, watched the reunion with a soft, understanding gaze, a faint, melancholic smile touching his lips. The raw, human emotion was a stark contrast to the cosmic revelations they had just endured, a grounding reminder of what truly mattered.

The next morning, the soft glow of dawn filtered through Izuku's bedroom curtains, painting the familiar All Might posters in hues of orange and gold. He stirred, a dull ache lingering behind his eyes, a phantom echo of the previous day's overwhelming revelations. He stretched, his muscles protesting slightly, and then sat up, the crisp sheets cool against his skin.

He moved through his morning routine with a quiet, almost mechanical precision. The toothbrush felt alien in his hand, the taste of toothpaste strangely muted. He dressed in his school uniform, the familiar fabric a small comfort in a world that had suddenly become wildly unfamiliar. As he descended the stairs, the scent of miso soup and grilled fish wafted from the kitchen.

"Morning, Mom," Izuku mumbled, pushing open the kitchen door.

Inko, bustling about the small kitchen, turned with a bright, cheerful smile. Her eyes, though still a little puffy from yesterday's tears, held no hint of the cosmic truths that had been unveiled. She was simply a mother, relieved to have her son home.

"Good morning, Izuku, darling!" she chirped, placing a bowl of steaming soup in front of him. "Eat up! You need your strength for school. And remember," she added, her smile softening, "if you still want to pursue an education at UA, just do your best, alright? That's all I ask."

Izuku swallowed, the miso soup tasting surprisingly bland. He nodded awkwardly. "Yeah, Mom. I will." He didn't know how to explain 'Agito' or 'divine heralds' or 'cosmic balance' to her. It felt like a different universe entirely. He finished his breakfast in a quiet hurry, the words unspoken hanging heavy in the air.

"Alright, I'm off," Izuku said, grabbing his backpack.

Inko hurried to the door, giving him a quick, firm hug. "Have a good day, Izuku! And be careful!" she called out, waving as he stepped out into the bright morning.

Outside, the sun mocked him with its cheerful brightness. He braced himself, and sure enough, a small gaggle of neighbors awaited him near the apartment entrance. Several familiar faces, people he'd seen daily for years but rarely interacted with beyond a polite nod, now offered surprisingly warm smiles and enthusiastic "Good morning, Izuku-kun!"s. Others, whose paths he'd crossed countless times, gave curt nods that were far more energetic than their usual silent acknowledgments. A few other residents also offered bright "Hello, Midoriya-kun!" as he passed. Their greetings, while simple, carried an undeniable new warmth, a subtle shift from the casual indifference he'd known his whole life.

Izuku mumbled a polite thank you, his cheeks burning, his gaze fixed on the scuffed toes of his sneakers. Their sudden admiration didn't fill him with the vindication he had expected. Not one bit, and part of him couldn't help but find such a reaction strange. He walked the gauntlet of well-wishers, the weight of their sudden attention heavier than any mockery.

At school, the initial intensity of the attention had dulled slightly, settling into a more manageable, albeit still unsettling, hum. Classmates still glanced his way, their whispers now laced with awe instead of disdain, but they weren't swarming him quite as aggressively. He managed to slide into his seat with fewer direct questions, and the teacher, Mr. Takeda, seemed to have resumed his usual weary, indifferent gaze, a small mercy.

Bakugo was still there, of course. Izuku could feel the burning intensity of his crimson eyes from across the room, a familiar, seething glare. A low growl occasionally rumbled from the explosive boy's direction, a silent promise of future confrontation. But explaining himself to Bakugo, or anyone else, wasn't a priority. Not now.

His mind was a whirlwind of impossible notions. His true nature. The higher beings. The universal equilibrium. Limitless potential. It was all so wildly illogical, so utterly beyond the confines of what he had always understood as "Quirk logic." Quirks had rules, limitations, scientific explanations, however convoluted. This? This was... something else entirely. A new normal, yes, but one he couldn't even rightly call normal because of how wildly illogical it all was. He just had to figure out how to navigate it, how to survive it, and somehow, how to still be a hero within it. The path ahead was terrifyingly unclear, but for the first time, it wasn't empty.

Izuku, after leaving school, made his way to the address Kagutsuchi had provided in the lower district of Musutafu. The old apartment building looked like it had seen better days, and with some hesitation and a deep breath, he pushed through the entrance. He navigated the worn hallways, the air thick with the scent of age and neglect, until he reached the fifth floor and found room 24.

The door to room 24 was plain, unremarkable, blending in with the others on the floor. He raised a trembling hand and knocked. The sound echoed in the quiet hallway, a stark punctuation to the silence. He waited, his heart thumping in his chest, wondering what awaited him inside.

He heard some shuffling and a faint noise inside, then the click of a lock. The door opened a crack, revealing a man. He was rugged, with spiky blonde hair and a scarred face, wearing a simple white tank top and black shorts. His eyes, though tired, held a sharp, assessing gaze as he looked at Izuku.

The two looked at each other in silence for a moment, the air thick with unspoken questions. Then, the man's gruff voice broke the quiet. "Who are you?" he asked, his tone flat, a hint of suspicion in his eyes.

Izuku flinched, startled by the directness and gruffness of the question. His heart, already racing, pounded even harder. He opened his mouth, then closed it, his mind scrambling for the right words. The man's appearance, so different from Kagutsuchi's polished demeanor, and the worn state of the building, made him feel even more out of place.

"I-I'm Midoriya," Izuku stammered, his voice a nervous squeak. He quickly bowed his head, a habit ingrained from years of anxious apologies. "Izuku Midoriya. K-Kagutsuchi-san told me to come here. He... he said this was the place." He risked a glance up, his wide green eyes filled with a mixture of apprehension and earnest hope.

The man blinked, a flicker of something unreadable in his eyes. "Kagutsuchi?" he mumbled, the name a question, and turned his head to look over his shoulder, as if expecting someone to be there. He then settled his gaze on the young man once more, with a twinge more suspicion, before slowly beckoning the boy inside.

Izuku, unwilling to just enter a room with a complete stranger, stammered, "Oh, um, I-I can just wait outside for Kagutsuchi-san if he's not here. I don't want to trouble you."

The man's eyes narrowed, and his face seemed to take on a gaunt consistency, the shadows around his features deepening. He hissed, his voice a low, unsettling whisper, "You can wait inside."

A frightened Izuku could only weakly comply, his shoulders slumping in resignation. He had no choice. He stepped across the threshold, into the dimly lit apartment, the door closing with a soft click behind him.

Izuku, frantically darting his eyes in caution, slowly relaxed as he took in his surroundings. The apartment was surprisingly cleaner than he had anticipated, especially given the building's exterior. It was minimalist, with sparse furniture, but everything seemed to be in its place, giving the small space a decent, almost spartan, appearance. The air, though a little stale, lacked the heavy scent of neglect he'd expected.

The blonde man then gruffly told Izuku, "Sit wherever you want." Without waiting for a reply, he walked over to a worn, but clean, couch against the far wall and settled down, picking up a remote and switching on a small, flickering television.

Minutes passed, stretching into an awkward silence broken only by the low hum of the television and the faint, tinny dialogue from whatever show the man was watching. He seemed to ignore Izuku completely, his gaze fixed on the screen, leaving Izuku to shift uncomfortably on the edge of a hard wooden chair he had chosen, his backpack clutched tightly in his lap. The initial relief at the apartment's cleanliness began to fade, replaced by a growing unease. He was alone with a complete stranger, in a strange apartment, and Kagutsuchi was nowhere to be seen. A cold sweat began to prickle at his hairline. Had he walked into a trap?

Suddenly, the man's voice cut through the quiet, startling Izuku so badly he almost jumped out of his skin. "Hey."

Izuku gasped, his heart leaping into his throat, his hands instinctively curling into tight fists on his lap, trembling visibly. "Wh-what?" he shakily responded, his voice barely a whisper, his eyes wide with renewed fear.

The man, still watching the TV, spoke without turning his head. "Kagutsuchi mentioned before he left that a kid would come along." He finally turned his head slightly, his tired eyes settling on Izuku. "Are you the kid he was talking about?"

Izuku nodded vigorously, his head bobbing up and down, his trembling only increasing as his curled hands were firmly pressed against his lap.

The man said nothing to this, resuming his silent vigil of the television. The awkward silence stretched on, even more oppressive than before, until a few minutes later, the door clicked open.

Kagutsuchi entered, carrying several paper bags that rustled with the unmistakable scent of fast food from a local burger joint. He spotted Izuku, still perched nervously on the chair.

"Hey, kid! You met Jin, good," Kagutsuchi said, a friendly greeting in his usual calm voice, as he walked further into the room. He then turned to the blonde man on the couch. "Was I gone too long, Jin?"

Jin, without taking his eyes off the TV, grunted, "It's cool."

Kagutsuchi chuckled, then looked back at Izuku. With a casual flick of his wrist, he tossed a burger, still in its wrapper, from one of the bags towards the boy. Izuku, startled, clumsily caught it with both trembling hands.

"Eat up, kid," Kagutsuchi instructed, his voice light. "It's the least I can do for making you wait. Had some business to attend." He then settled onto the floor, cross-legged, opening his own burger and taking a bite. Jin, still engrossed in the television, reached into a bag and pulled out his own meal.

As the three ate in a strained quiet, the only sounds being the rustle of wrappers and the low murmur of the TV, Kagutsuchi turned his gaze to Izuku, who was slowly, shakily, taking a bite of his burger.

"So," Kagutsuchi began, his voice calm, "are you ready to accept my offer of training, Izuku Midoriya?"

Izuku, his mouth full, nearly choked on his bite. He swallowed quickly, then nodded vigorously, his trembling hands still clutching the burger.

"Great," Kagutsuchi replied, a faint smile touching his lips. "But we'll have to do it with Toshinori in tow, of course. That was the deal, after all."

Izuku nodded again, his gaze furtively flickering towards Jin on the couch, then back to Kagutsuchi. Kagutsuchi noticed the glance and, with a shrug, lightly introduced the man.

"Oh, right. Izuku, this is Jin Bubaigawara. My roommate."

Jin scoffed, finally tearing his eyes away from the TV to glare at Kagutsuchi. "Roommate? Don't sugarcoat it. I'm just a freeloader. Don't even have a job."

Kagutsuchi merely smiled, unperturbed. "You'll have a job eventually, Jin. You'll just have to see it through."

Jin grunted in response, his gaze already returning to the television.

Izuku, still clutching his burger, managed a shaky, almost inaudible, "P-Pleasure to meet you, Jin-san."

Jin merely grunted again, his eyes glued to the screen.

Izuku's gaze flickered between Jin and Kagutsuchi, a silent question in his wide eyes, clearly wondering about Jin's knowledge of Kagutsuchi's true nature. Kagutsuchi, catching the unspoken query, shrugged, a faint, knowing smirk playing on his lips. "Oh, you mean Jin?" he said, his voice casual. "Yeah, he knows enough. He just doesn't care."

Another grunt from Jin.

Kagutsuchi then turned his full attention back to Izuku. "So, Izuku, you up for starting this training this Saturday? Still got months until the UA Entrance Exams, plenty of time to get you sorted."

Hearing the mention of the UA Entrance Exams, a spark ignited in Izuku's eyes, and his voice gained a surprising clarity and resolve. "Yes! Yes, I'm willing to come!"

Kagutsuchi's smile widened. "Excellent. That's what I like to hear. Now that you know this address, you won't have any trouble coming to me for some help if you ever need it." He then glanced at Jin. "Jin can be moral support."

Jin let out another low grunt, still not looking away from the TV.

Izuku could only look between Jin and Kagutsuchi, a strange sense of the dynamic between the two settling over him. It was clear Jin was used to Kagutsuchi's eccentricities, and Kagutsuchi, in turn, seemed completely unfazed by Jin's gruff demeanor.

Later, as he was riding the train home, the city lights blurring past the window, Izuku began to notice something. An odd feeling, a prickling sensation, crept up the back of his neck. He subtly looked over his shoulder, seeing the other passengers minding their own business, engrossed in their phones or conversations. Nothing else. Thinking he had just imagined it, a lingering effect of the day's overwhelming events, he relaxed and waited for his stop.

The following Saturday, Izuku found himself heading to Dagobah Beach, the very place where his life had irrevocably changed. The early morning air was cool and crisp, carrying the faint scent of salt and stagnant water. As he approached the familiar, trash-strewn expanse, the rising sun painted the sky in hues of orange and pink, casting long, distorted shadows from the mountains of discarded appliances and debris. By the rusted barrier overlooking the polluted shore, he saw them. Toshinori, looking remarkably robust in a comfortable tracksuit, stood tall and imposing. Beside him, Kagutsuchi sat casually on the barrier, his dark eyes fixed on the serene beauty of the sunrise, a stark contrast to the chaotic landscape around them.

Toshinori, spotting Midoriya, waved him over jovially, a wide smile on his face, eager to begin. Kagutsuchi remained quiet, simply observing as Izuku hurried near, the boy bowing respectfully to both of them.

"Glad you could make it, Young Midoriya!" Toshinori boomed, his voice full of his renewed vigor. "Which means we can finally begin!"

Izuku nodded, his gaze flickering from Toshinori to the still-relaxed Kagutsuchi. Kagutsuchi, sensing the unspoken question, gestured with a lazy hand towards Toshinori.

"Go on, Toshinori," Kagutsuchi prompted, a hint of amusement in his tone. "Explain today's objective."

Toshinori grinned, turning to face the vast, unsightly mounds of trash that stretched across the beach. Izuku's eyes followed, widening at the sight, and he spotted some lingering traces of his terrifying battle with the skeletal monster still present amidst the debris. He then gazed back at Toshinori, his expression silently asking if the man was truly serious.

Toshinori's grin only widened. "Indeed, Young Midoriya! Your task is to clean up Dagobah Beach!" He spread his arms wide, encompassing the entire chaotic scene. "This isn't merely about physical exertion, though you'll certainly get plenty of that! This is about forging your body, yes, but also about honing your spirit. You, Young Midoriya, are an Agito, a being with limitless potential, but that power is raw, untamed. To truly wield it, you must first understand the foundations of strength, discipline, and perseverance. This beach, in its current state, is a symbol of neglect, of what happens when things are left to rot. By clearing it, you will not only build the physical fortitude necessary to control your awakening, but you will also cultivate the unwavering resolve, the sense of responsibility, and the connection to the world around you that all true heroes possess. It's about earning your power, not just having it. It's about becoming a vessel strong enough to contain the immense force within you, and a hero worthy of wielding it."

Hearing this, Izuku once again looked to the junkyard, then back at Toshinori, a flicker of doubt crossing his face before he shook it away with a determined shake of his head. "Yes!" he responded, his voice resounding with a newfound conviction.

The next few hours blurred into a grueling, sweat-soaked montage. Izuku started with a burst of eager energy, tackling a rusted refrigerator, attempting to drag it with sheer willpower. He strained, muscles screaming, but it barely budged. He stumbled, scraped his knee on a jagged piece of metal, and nearly tripped over a forgotten tire. Failure after failure met his initial efforts. He tried to lift a washing machine, only to have it crash back down, narrowly missing his foot. He attempted to pull a tangled mess of wires, only to find himself ensnared. His hands quickly became raw, his clothes grimy, and his breath came in ragged gasps.

Toshinori, ever the encouraging mentor, offered shouts of encouragement and practical advice from the barrier, demonstrating proper lifting techniques, and pointing out lighter, more manageable items. Kagutsuchi, however, remained mostly silent, a calm, almost detached observer.

About an hour into the arduous task, as Izuku was heaving a particularly stubborn pile of scrap metal, his muscles burning and his heart hammering in his chest, Kagutsuchi's voice cut through the morning air.

"This is also a way for you to keep yourself from transforming, Izuku!" Kagutsuchi called out, his voice carrying clearly over the sounds of the waves and Izuku's labored breathing. "Your Agito power responds to intense bouts of adrenaline. By pushing your body to its limits through sheer physical exertion, you're channeling that energy, giving it an outlet, and preventing it from building up into an uncontrolled awakening!"

Izuku, drenched in sweat, his chest heaving, paused. He looked down at his trembling hands, then back at his body. He was exhausted, yes, but there was no familiar searing heat or chilling cold, no unsettling sensation of something "other" trying to take over. He was just... tired. Really, really tired. He felt the adrenaline coursing through him from the physical strain, but it was a different kind of rush, one that felt contained, manageable. He realized Kagutsuchi was right. The sheer, unadulterated physical effort was keeping the monstrous power at bay. With a renewed, albeit weary, determination, Izuku bent back to his task, the rhythm of his labor now imbued with a new, critical purpose.

By the late afternoon, Izuku had barely put a dent in the sheer density of trash left at Dagobah Beach. Yet, the fact that he had managed to move anything at all was impressive to Toshinori. The Symbol of Peace approached the exhausted, barely standing boy, a proud smile on his face. He reached out and clapped a hand on Izuku's back, a gesture of encouragement. However, Toshinori's returning strength, still somewhat uncalibrated, caused the friendly pat to be far more forceful than intended. With a surprised grunt, Izuku stumbled forward, landing squarely on the ground, a heap of weary green hair and sweat-soaked clothes.

The training continued for days, then weeks, after Izuku left Aldera. Each session at Dagobah Beach was a brutal test of endurance. Gradually, the mountains of garbage began to shrink, piece by agonizing piece. Izuku's initial clumsy efforts gave way to more efficient movements, his body slowly adapting to the relentless strain. He learned to brace himself, to lift with his legs, to find leverage where there seemed to be none. His muscles, once soft, began to harden, and his stamina steadily increased.

Through the countless scratches, bruises, and minor injuries he suffered from the jagged edges of metal and splintered wood, Izuku began to notice something remarkable: his body was recovering at an astonishing rate. A deep ache that would have lingered for days before now faded within hours. A nasty scrape that should have scabbed over slowly was nearly gone by the next morning. His biology was steadily adapting, accelerating its healing processes to match the demands placed upon it.

Toshinori, observing Izuku's rapid progress, nodded with a profound sense of satisfaction. "The fact that he's able to adapt so quickly, Kagutsuchi," he remarked, his gaze fixed on Izuku as the boy wrestled a discarded washing machine onto a dolly, "it truly speaks volumes about how legitimate this Agito power is."

Kagutsuchi, ever casual, merely offered a knowing smirk. "Right?" he shot back, his eyes twinkling. "Agito's bodies become more adaptive as they grow. It accelerates what would take an average person months and even years to accomplish. It's quite efficient, really."

Toshinori nodded, a thoughtful hum escaping him as he considered Kagutsuchi's words. His gaze drifted to Izuku, who was now attempting to drag a particularly large television. "It's not just the healing, either," he mused aloud. "His diet has become voracious, demanding far more calories than someone his age would typically need, yet his physique shows no signs of gaining any excess fat. Only the tautening of his muscles."

Kagutsuchi agreed, a faint chuckle escaping him. "Indeed. An Agito tends to burn calories at a rate that would make even a top athlete look bloated. It's just a natural consequence of their accelerated biology."

Toshinori could only be impressed, a genuine look of awe on his face as he watched Izuku continue his work. "I wonder," he murmured, almost to himself, "how much further the boy will continue to grow once he finally reaches UA."

Days later, with only two months to go until the UA entrance exams, a triumphant scene unfolded at Dagobah Beach. The once insurmountable mountains of trash had dwindled to a mere hill, and Izuku, exhausted but visibly more muscular, stood at the very top of the last remaining pile. His shirt was off, discarded somewhere in the cleared sand, and the setting sun cast a golden glow on his sweat-sheened skin, highlighting the taut lines of his newly defined muscles. His face, though etched with fatigue, gave way to a wide, genuine smile that spoke volumes of his monumental effort and unwavering resolve.

He then threw his head back, letting out a raw, triumphant roar that echoed across the now-cleaner beach, a primal cry of accomplishment and burgeoning power. Toshinori and Kagutsuchi, standing by the barrier, watched him. Toshinori, his eyes wide with emotion, was more than moved by the sight, a profound sense of pride and hope swelling in his chest. Kagutsuchi, meanwhile, simply watched, a subtle, satisfied curve to his lips.

Izuku, having dismounted from the heap, now stood before Toshinori and Kagutsuchi on the newly cleared shore. Toshinori, his face alight with unbridled pride, clapped Izuku heartily on the shoulder, though with more controlled strength this time. "Young Midoriya! I knew you had it in you! To clear this beach... it's an incredible feat! Truly, truly remarkable! I am so incredibly proud of you!"

Izuku, still breathless and aching, beamed back, a deep bow accompanying his heartfelt "Thank you, All Might! Thank you, Kagutsuchi-san!"

He then looked to Kagutsuchi, who had his hands casually in his pockets, a cigarette between his lips – a sight Izuku had grown accustomed to over the weeks of their training sessions. Kagutsuchi took a slow drag, exhaling a plume of smoke before speaking.

"Yeah, kid, impressive," Kagutsuchi admitted, his voice surprisingly sincere. "Honestly, I'm genuinely impressed you stuck with it. Most people would have quit after the first day. You've got grit, I'll give you that. And I'm proud, I guess, in my own way. But now," he paused, the cigarette still dangling, his dark eyes fixing on Izuku with a sudden intensity, "now it's time for the next test."

Izuku's smile faltered, replaced by a look of confusion, while Toshinori's proud expression shifted to one of concern.

"For you to transform," Kagutsuchi continued, his voice low and clear, "in front of us. Willingly."

Izuku's eyes widened, and he shared a stunned look with Toshinori. The former Symbol of Peace quickly turned to Kagutsuchi, his brow furrowed. "Are you sure, Kagutsuchi-san?"

Kagutsuchi nodded, taking another drag from his cigarette. "Positive. He needs to actually transform into his Agito armor. What we call his Ground Form. It's the most basic, and he needs to learn to activate it on command."

"G-Ground Form?" The terminology threw Izuku off, but then he caught something from the man's words, a new, even more startling implication. "Wait a minute, Kagutsuchi-san. Do-Do you mean…that there are… other forms?"

Toshinori, hearing Izuku's question, felt a jolt of his own. His eyes, already wide, widened further as he looked at Kagutsuchi, a silent question mirroring Izuku's. The idea of Agito having multiple forms, evolving and adapting, was a concept far grander than anything he had ever conceived for a Quirk, let alone a power that seemed to transcend Quirks entirely. The sheer potential, the implications for Izuku's future, suddenly stretched out before him like an endless horizon. Awe, pure and unadulterated, washed over him.

Kagutsuchi blew a slow stream of smoke into the morning air, his eyes unreadable. "Of course there are, kid. Ground Form is just the beginning. It's your base, your most balanced state. But Agito, by nature, is about evolution, adaptation. As you grow, as you understand your power more, and as you face different challenges, your Agito will manifest new forms, new abilities, tailored to those needs. Think of it as a living armor, constantly evolving with you. But you can't run before you can walk, and you certainly can't fly before you can even stand properly in your most fundamental form. That's why we start here. We start with Ground Form. You need to master the basics before you even think about what else might be waiting." He took another drag, his gaze piercing. "So, are you ready to try?"

Izuku swallowed hard, his mind reeling. Other forms? A living armor? The concept was staggering, overwhelming. But beneath the fear and confusion, a thrill of excitement, of boundless possibility, began to bubble. This wasn't just about becoming a hero; it was about unlocking something truly extraordinary within himself. He thought back to the terrifying, uncontrolled transformation, the feeling of being a puppet to a monstrous power. Now, Kagutsuchi was asking him to command it. To choose it.

He took a deep, shaky breath, the salty air filling his lungs. He closed his eyes, trying to recall the sensation, the core of that power. It wasn't adrenaline this time; it had to be something else, something deeper. He focused on the feeling of his own strength, the resilience he'd built cleaning this very beach. He remembered Kagutsuchi's words: "channeling that energy."

A faint, golden aura began to shimmer around him, almost imperceptible at first. Then, a low hum vibrated through the air, growing in intensity. Izuku clenched his fists, concentrating. The familiar searing heat and chilling cold, which had once been terrifying signs of losing control, now felt… different. They were still potent, but they felt like his sensations, a raw energy waiting for his command.

With a grunt of effort, Izuku pushed, not outward, but inward, drawing the energy to a central point. The golden aura flared, becoming brighter, more defined. From his skin, sleek, black armor, segmented and rippling with defined musculature, began to emerge. A large, sculpted golden plate covered his chest and upper back, while his forearms and shins were encased in solid gold sections. A metallic clink echoed across the beach as the suit solidified, conforming perfectly to his new, imposing physique. A prominent golden belt buckle, emblazoned with a central symbol, appeared at his waist. Finally, the transformation reached his head: his unruly green hair was encased by a sleek, black helmet topped with a striking golden, crescent-shaped crest. Large, crimson lenses, focused and intense, stared out from the visor, a stark contrast to the dark, sleek form.

The hum subsided, replaced by the rhythmic sound of the waves. Standing before them was not the terrified, scrawny boy, but a figure of imposing power: the Agito Ground Form.

Toshinori gasped, a hand flying to his mouth, his eyes wide with a mixture of shock and profound admiration. This was it. This was the true power. It was terrifying, yes, but controlled, magnificent. He felt a surge of pride so strong it almost brought tears to his eyes.

Kagutsuchi, meanwhile, simply watched, a faint, satisfied smile now fully gracing his lips. He took a final drag from his cigarette, then flicked the butt into the sand, his gaze unwavering on the transformed Izuku. "There it is," he murmured, almost to himself. "The first step."