The U.A. High locker room buzzed with the symphony of adolescent energy—excited chatter, the rustle of fabric, and the occasional clang of metal as students wrestled with their hero costumes. Sunlight, filtered through high windows, cast long, shifting shadows across the rows of lockers.

Izuku Midoriya, however, moved with a quiet intensity that set him apart. He carefully unzipped his dark, tactical hero suit, the subtle phoenix emblem on his chest a silent testament to the power stirring within him. As the fabric settled comfortably over his frame, his mind replayed Kagutsuchi's unsettling words from that morning, just as he'd stepped through the school gates.

"Don't make too much noise," Kagutsuchi had purred, his smile infuriatingly serene, his janitor's uniform comically out of place against U.A.'s grand entrance. "For today, just take it easy."

The casual warning, delivered with unnerving pleasantness, had lodged itself in Izuku's mind, a cold knot of apprehension. He was still trying to decipher its exact meaning. Was it a warning about his Quirk? About his very existence? Or something else entirely?

"Hey, Deku! Still fumbling with that pathetic excuse for a costume?"

The familiar, gravelly voice cut through Izuku's thoughts like a knife. Katsuki Bakugo, already fully suited in his explosive gauntlets and scowl, stomped over, his crimson eyes blazing with competitive fire. He looked like a walking, talking grenade, ready to detonate.

"Listen up, you damn extras!" Bakugo roared, his voice echoing off the metal lockers, drawing the attention of half the room. "Today's rescue training at the USJ Dome is gonna be a piece of cake for me! I'll ace it, no problem! Especially you, Deku! I'm gonna show you exactly how a real hero handles a crisis!"

He punctuated his boast with a small, crackling explosion from his palm, a clear challenge. Kirishima, Sero, and Kaminari, who had been laughing nearby, exchanged nervous glances.

Izuku merely continued to adjust his gloves, his movements precise and unhurried. He didn't meet Bakugo's gaze, didn't rise to the bait. The usual surge of anxiety, the old instinct to stammer a defense or shrink away, was absent. His silence seemed to infuriate Bakugo even more.

"What, you deaf, nerd?! I'm talking to you! Or are you finally admitting you're a worthless pebble compared to me?!" Bakugo snarled, stepping closer, his explosions growing louder.

"Bakugo-kun, please!" Tenya Iida, now in his sleek hero suit, chopped his arms emphatically as he sped over. "We must maintain decorum! This is a professional environment, and we are about to embark on crucial rescue training! Such boisterous behavior is unbecoming of a U.A. student!"

"Shut it, Four-Eyes! This doesn't concern you!" Bakugo snapped, turning his glare on Iida for a split second before refocusing on Izuku. "You're just gonna get in the way, Deku! Just like always!"

Ochako Uraraka, already in her form-fitting hero suit, hurried over, her expression worried. "Bakugo, don't be mean! Izuku-kun's going to do great!"

Izuku finally looked up, his green eyes meeting Bakugo's. There was no fear, no challenge, just a quiet, almost unsettling calm. He simply gave a small, almost imperceptible nod, then turned back to his locker, securing a pouch on his utility belt.

The gesture, or lack thereof, seemed to drain the air from Bakugo's rage. He stared, momentarily bewildered by Izuku's uncharacteristic indifference. The usual panicked fluster was gone, replaced by something unreadable.

"Tch!" Bakugo finally scoffed, turning away with a frustrated huff, his palms still sparking. "Whatever, nerd! Just try not to get in my way!" He stalked off, muttering under his breath, leaving a faint scent of nitroglycerin in his wake.

Ochako sighed in relief. "Glad that's over. You okay, Izuku-kun? He was really trying to get a rise out of you."

Izuku gave her a faint, almost distant smile. "I'm fine, Uraraka-san. Just... thinking about the training. It's important we do well today."

He closed his locker, the metallic click echoing in the suddenly quieter space. His mind, however, was still on Kagutsuchi's words, a silent mantra repeating in his head: Don't make too much noise. Don't make too much noise.

He knew, with a chilling certainty, that today's rescue training was about to become far more than just an exercise.

The bus ride to the USJ Dome was a lively affair, a stark contrast to the quiet tension Izuku carried. His classmates, now fully clad in their vibrant hero costumes, chattered excitedly, their voices a cheerful din. Even Todoroki, usually reserved, offered a rare comment about the efficiency of ice in certain terrains.

Izuku sat by the window, watching the city blur by, his gaze distant. Ochako, beside him, occasionally nudged him, trying to draw him into the conversation, but his responses were brief, his focus elsewhere. He felt a prickle of unease, a sense that something was off, a subtle discord in the world around him that only he seemed to perceive. It was the Agito's subtle influence, a heightened awareness that made the mundane seem fragile.

Aizawa-sensei, wrapped in his signature sleeping bag, sat at the front of the bus, seemingly asleep, but Izuku knew better. All Might, however, was nowhere to be seen. The thought of the Symbol of Peace not being present for such an important training exercise added another layer of apprehension to Izuku's already troubled mind.

Finally, the bus pulled to a stop in front of a massive, domed structure. The Unforeseen Simulation Joint (USJ) Dome loomed before them, its futuristic architecture gleaming under the morning sun. As they disembarked, the sheer scale of the facility became apparent.

"Welcome, students, to the Unforeseen Simulation Joint!" a cheerful voice boomed.

Standing at the entrance was the Space Hero: Thirteen, her astronaut-like suit making them appear both imposing and friendly. Beside her stood Aizawa-sensei, now out of his sleeping bag, his usual tired expression firmly in place.

"This facility is designed to simulate every kind of disaster you can imagine," Thirteen explained, gesturing grandly at the various zones visible through the dome's transparent roof: a landslide zone, a conflagration zone, a flood zone, and more. "Your rescue training today will push your Quirks and your minds to their limits!"

The students gasped, their excitement renewed. Even Bakugo looked intrigued, a faint smirk playing on his lips.

As Thirteen continued her explanation, detailing the dangers and the importance of using their Quirks responsibly, Izuku's eyes scanned the vast interior. His Agito-enhanced senses picked up faint echoes, subtle vibrations that seemed out of place. A cold dread began to creep up his spine.

Then, it happened.

The lights flickered. A dark, swirling vortex of purple mist began to coalesce at the base of the central fountain, growing larger, more ominous. From within its depths, figures began to emerge.

Villains.

Dozens of them. Ragtag, menacing, their Quirks varied and dangerous. They poured out of the warp gate like a tide, their eyes fixed on the unsuspecting students.

"What's going on?" Kirishima asked, his voice laced with confusion, a nervous sweat beading on his forehead. "Is this part of the training?"

Aizawa-sensei's eyes, however, were wide with alarm. His capture scarf flared, and his posture tensed, ready for combat. "Thirteen! Protect the students! These are real villains!"

The words hit the class like a physical blow. The cheerful chatter died instantly, replaced by a stunned, terrified silence. The reality of the situation crashed down on them, heavy and undeniable.

Izuku felt a jolt of recognition. The subtle discord he'd sensed on the bus, the unease that had gnawed at him—it was all culminating now. Kagutsuchi's words echoed in his mind, no longer cryptic warnings, but a chilling prophecy.

Don't make too much noise.

But it was already too late. The noise had arrived, in the form of a villainous invasion, and Izuku knew, with a terrifying certainty, that this was the "disruption" Kagutsuchi had warned him about. The test, it seemed, had truly begun.

The USJ Dome erupted into chaos. Aizawa-sensei, with a snarl, launched himself forward, his capture scarf whipping out like a serpent, his eyes glowing crimson as he began erasing Quirks left and right. She was a blur of motion, a lone sentinel against the tide of villains, buying precious seconds for her students.

"Everyone! Evacuate!" Thirteen's voice, usually gentle, was now sharp with urgency. "Follow Iida-kun! He'll get you out of here!"

But before the students could fully react, a swirling mass of dark purple mist expanded rapidly from the central plaza. Kurogiri, the warp villain, his metallic neck brace glinting ominously, spread his misty form, engulfing the bewildered students.

"It is a pleasure to meet you, U.A. students," Kurogiri's deep, resonant voice echoed, devoid of emotion. "We are the League of Villains, and our purpose is to eliminate All Might. However, it seems he is not here. A pity. But we can still cause considerable damage."

The mist swirled faster, distorting the space around them. Students cried out in alarm as the ground beneath them vanished, replaced by dizzying shifts in perspective.

"A-Ah! What's happening?!" Mineta shrieked, flailing as he was sucked into a warp.

"We're being scattered!" Momo Yaoyorozu yelled, her eyes wide with alarm as she felt herself pulled in a different direction.

"Hold on!" Kirishima shouted, trying to grab Sero, but the mist consumed them both.

Bakugo, caught off guard, roared in frustration as he felt himself being dragged. "Damn it! You misty bastard!"

Izuku, however, moved with almost preternatural speed. His Agito-enhanced senses, already on high alert, registered the subtle shift in air pressure, the faint hum of energy just before the warp fully enveloped him. He saw the edge of Kurogiri's physical form—the metallic neck brace, the faint outline of a body within the mist.

"Not today!" Izuku growled, his voice low and determined. In a burst of speed that left a faint afterimage, he zipped forward, a green blur cutting through the chaos. He bypassed the warp's pull by a hair's breadth, his hand already cocked back.

Smash!

His fist connected with Kurogiri's metallic neck brace, a solid, resounding thwack that echoed through the plaza. The force of the blow, amplified by Izuku's awakened strength, wasn't enough to shatter the villain, but it sent a violent tremor through his misty form. Kurogiri recoiled, his form momentarily flickering and destabilizing, a faint groan escaping his usually impassive voice.

"A direct hit?!" Thirteen exclaimed, her voice filled with surprise and a hint of admiration. "Midoriya-kun, excellent work! You disoriented him!"

Seizing the moment, Thirteen's fingers, which were actually nozzles, opened. A powerful, concentrated stream of black hole-like suction erupted from her fingertips, aimed directly at the villains who were now attempting to swarm them, drawn by the commotion. The villains screamed as they were pulled in, their bodies contorting and compressing, before being rendered immobile and unconscious, trapped within the localized gravitational pull. Thirteen's Quirk, "Black Hole," was devastatingly effective for incapacitation.

Kurogiri, still reeling from Izuku's unexpected punch, solidified just enough to open a small warp gate beneath himself. "This... is not over," he rasped, his voice strained. With a final, lingering glance at Izuku, a flicker of something akin to surprise in his misty eyes, he vanished into the swirling purple portal.

"He got away!" Ochako cried, landing hard beside Izuku, panting.

"No, not entirely," Izuku said, his gaze fixed on the spot where Kurogiri had disappeared. His brow furrowed in thought. "He retreated, but he didn't escape. He's the only one who can create these warps... he's the villains' way in, and their way out."

Thirteen nodded grimly, her attention still on the remaining scattered villains, now collapsed and harmlessly contained by her Quirk's effect. "You're right, Midoriya-kun. He's essential to their operation. We need to find him, or at least ensure he can't regroup. But first, we must secure the students and assist Aizawa-sensei!"

The USJ was still a battleground, but a small victory had been won. Izuku, with his quick thinking and decisive strike, had bought them a moment, a chance to fight back. The test, he realized, was far from over.

The students of Class 1-A were now scattered across the various zones of the USJ, each thrust into an immediate, brutal struggle for survival. The training exercise had become a terrifying reality.

Flood Zone: Tsuyu and Mineta

Tsuyu Asui landed with a soft splash in the murky waters of the Flood Zone, her large, webbed feet finding purchase on a submerged ledge. Beside her, Mineta Minoru shrieked as he tumbled headfirst into the water, his hero costume immediately becoming waterlogged.

"Ribbit! Mineta-kun, are you alright?" Tsuyu asked, her long tongue darting out to help him regain his footing.

"No, I'm not alright! This is terrifying! We're gonna die!" Mineta wailed, his eyes wide with panic as he tried to shake the water from his purple, sticky hairballs.

Suddenly, the water around them churned. Dark shapes, large and menacing, began to surface. These were aquatic villains, their Quirks ranging from enhanced swimming to water manipulation. They circled the two students, their grins predatory.

"Look what we have here, a couple of little fish!" one villain sneered, his body rippling like a shark. "Easy pickings!"

Tsuyu's eyes narrowed. "Don't underestimate us, ribbit." With a powerful kick, she propelled herself through the water, her movements fluid and fast. She used her tongue to snatch two villains, slamming their heads together before tossing them onto a rocky outcrop.

Mineta, meanwhile, was trying to climb a slippery pillar, leaving sticky Pop Off balls in his wake. "Help! Help! I'm too cute to die!" he cried, tears streaming down his face.

"Mineta-kun, use your Quirk!" Tsuyu urged, dodging a villain's water blast.

Inspired by desperation, Mineta ripped a handful of his sticky balls from his head and hurled them into the water. They floated, creating a minefield. As the villains swam towards them, several got stuck, their movements restricted.

"Now, Tsuyu-chan!" Mineta yelled, pointing.

Tsuyu, seeing the opening, dove deep, then burst from the water, grabbing a villain with her tongue and swinging him like a wrecking ball into a cluster of his comrades, sending them all flying into Mineta's sticky traps. The water was still dangerous, but for now, they had a fighting chance.

Mountain Zone: Kirishima and Bakugo

Kirishima Eijiro landed hard on a steep, rocky incline, his hardened skin absorbing the impact. Beside him, Bakugo Katsuki landed with a furious "Tch!" and immediately blasted himself upright.

"Damn it! Where the hell are we?!" Bakugo roared, his eyes scanning the jagged peaks and narrow passes.

"Looks like the Mountain Zone!" Kirishima shouted back, hardening his arms as three burly villains, their bodies covered in jagged rock and sharp claws, emerged from behind a boulder. "And we've got company!"

"Heh, perfect," Bakugo sneered, a manic grin spreading across his face. "More cannon fodder for me to blow up!" He immediately launched himself forward, palms sparking, letting out a barrage of explosions. "DIE!"

The villains, caught off guard by his aggression, scattered. Kirishima, seeing Bakugo charge headfirst, hardened his entire body and followed, yelling, "Wait, Bakugo! Don't go in alone!"

But Bakugo was already engaged, weaving through the rocky terrain, his explosions tearing through the air. One villain, with a Quirk that allowed him to extend his limbs like whips, tried to ensnare him. Bakugo twisted, blasting an explosion directly into the villain's face, sending him sprawling.

Kirishima, meanwhile, engaged another villain in a brutal exchange of blows, his hardened fists clashing against the villain's rocky hide. "Red Gauntlet!" he yelled, delivering a powerful punch that sent the villain stumbling. "This is so manly!"

The mountain zone echoed with the sounds of explosions, cracking rock, and Bakugo's furious shouts. They were outnumbered, but their offensive Quirks were proving effective, turning the defensive struggle into a brutal, head-on assault.

Conflagration Zone: Todoroki

Shoto Todoroki landed silently in a desolate, ash-covered landscape, the air thick with the smell of smoke and burning embers. Flames licked at the edges of crumbling buildings, and molten rivers flowed slowly through cracked earth. This was the Conflagration Zone.

"Hm," he murmured, his gaze cool and analytical as he surveyed the inferno.

Before he could fully assess his surroundings, a group of villains—some with fire-based Quirks, others with enhanced strength—emerged from the smoky haze. Their eyes gleamed with malicious intent.

"Well, well, look what we have here," one villain chuckled, his hands wreathed in flames. "A pretty boy playing hero. Let's see how you like the heat!"

Todoroki's expression remained impassive. "You misunderstand," he said, his voice calm. "I control the heat."

With a swift, decisive motion, he slammed his right foot onto the ground. A massive wave of ice erupted, spreading rapidly across the ash-covered earth, freezing the molten rivers solid and encasing the fire villains up to their waists. The flames on their bodies flickered and died, replaced by a thin layer of frost.

The remaining villains, startled, tried to charge him. Todoroki, without a hint of hesitation, extended his left hand. A torrent of scorching flames burst forth, creating a wall of fire that forced them back.

"You're in my domain now," Todoroki stated, his voice devoid of emotion, his dual-colored eyes reflecting both the ice and the fire. He was systematically creating a controlled environment, turning the villains' advantage against them, and fighting with a chilling efficiency.

Landslide Zone: Yaoyorozu and Jiro

Momo Yaoyorozu tumbled down a steep, rubble-strewn slope, landing awkwardly but quickly regaining her balance. Kyoka Jiro landed beside her, her earphone jacks whipping out to stabilize herself. The air was dusty, filled with the scent of pulverized rock and damp earth. This was the Landslide Zone, a treacherous landscape of shifting ground and unstable cliffs.

"Are you alright, Jiro-san?" Yaoyorozu asked, already assessing their precarious position.

"Yeah, just a little dusty," Jiro replied, her earphone jacks twitching, listening for any sounds. "Looks like we're in a bad spot. The ground's unstable."

Suddenly, the ground above them rumbled. A dozen villains, some with Quirks that manipulated earth, others with enhanced digging abilities, began to slide down the slope, their eyes fixed on the two girls.

"Fresh meat for the taking!" one villain roared, his hands glowing with a faint tremor.

"They're trying to bury us!" Jiro exclaimed, plugging her jacks into the ground, sending out a powerful sonic vibration that momentarily destabilized the villains, making them stumble.

"Quick thinking, Jiro-san!" Yaoyorozu commended. Her mind raced, analyzing the environment. "We need to create a stable platform, and then a defensive barrier!"

She immediately began creating a large, reinforced net from her arm, the material rapidly forming. "Jiro-san, target their feet! Keep them off balance!"

Jiro nodded, unleashing another sonic blast that sent vibrations through the ground, making the villains lose their footing. As they struggled, Yaoyorozu finished her net, then quickly began creating a series of thick, interlocking metal plates, forming a makeshift wall.

"They're too many!" Jiro yelled, pulling her jacks back as a villain with rock-hard fists lunged at them.

Yaoyorozu, with a desperate surge of creativity, finished the last plate, then quickly created a small, powerful cannon. "Jiro-san! Aim for the unstable rock face above them!"

Jiro, understanding instantly, plugged her jacks into the cannon. "Got it!" She channeled her sound into the device, and with a deafening BOOM, a concentrated sonic blast shot out, striking the cliff face above the villains.

The ground groaned, then gave way. A cascade of rocks and dirt rained down, burying the charging villains under a fresh landslide. Yaoyorozu quickly deployed her net, catching stray debris and creating a temporary shelter.

They were safe for now, but the battle was far from over. Each student, in their own isolated arena, was fighting for their lives, their training put to the ultimate, brutal test.

Back in the central plaza, the air still hummed with residual energy from Kurogiri's warp. Aizawa-sensei, his hair floating and eyes glowing, was a whirlwind of motion, his capture scarf a relentless extension of his will. He moved with brutal efficiency, striking down villains with precise, debilitating blows, erasing their Quirks before they could even activate them.

"Izuku, stay close!" Aizawa barked, sweeping his scarf around a group of charging thugs, slamming them hard into the ground.

"Thirteen, cover our rear!"

"Understood!" Thirteen responded, her Black Hole Quirk flaring to life in a focused, controlled vortex. Instead of tearing through the villains, the swirling gravity pulled them off their feet, dragging them toward the ground. They clawed at the floor, their weapons scattering, before collapsing unconscious under the crushing pressure. Thirteen adjusted the intensity with practiced precision, ensuring they were subdued but unharmed.

Izuku didn't need to be told twice. His Agito instincts were on overdrive, letting him predict the villains' movements with uncanny precision. He weaved through attacks, delivering sharp, efficient strikes that sent opponents sprawling. His movements were cold, calculated—every punch and kick was measured, every shift in stance purposeful. Kagutsuchi's words about "adaptation" and "instinct" echoed in his mind with every fluid motion.

They cut a path through the throng, their combined efforts a force multiplier. Aizawa's Quirk suppression and close-quarters combat were perfectly complemented by Izuku's raw, focused power and Thirteen's wide-area neutralization. They were pushing towards the central fountain, towards where Kurogiri had disappeared.

As they neared the fountain, the purple mist began to coalesce once more, thicker and more stable this time. Kurogiri's form solidified, his metallic neck brace glinting.

"He's back," Izuku muttered, his posture tensing, ready for another assault.

Aizawa's eyes narrowed, his capture scarf already poised. He leaned slightly towards Thirteen, his voice a low whisper. "Thirteen, did you manage to get a call out for backup?"

"Yes, Aizawa," Thirteen confirmed, their voice strained but firm. "I sent a signal to the school. But it will take some time for them to arrive."

As if on cue, the purple mist behind Kurogiri swirled violently, expanding to reveal another figure. This one was gaunt, covered in disembodied hands, with stringy, pale blue hair and a chillingly casual posture. He scratched at his neck, his movements jerky and unsettling.

"Well, well, well," the newcomer rasped, his voice dry and scratchy, like sandpaper. "Looks like the main event is finally here. Kurogiri, you let a child get a lucky shot in." He turned his head, his red eyes, visible through the gaps in the hands on his face, fixing on Aizawa and Izuku. "I am Tomura Shigaraki. And I am here to end this."

Izuku's eyes widened, a cold dread seizing his chest. Tomura Shigaraki. The name echoed in his mind, connecting with the fragmented memories and revelations from Nana Shimura. Nana's grandson... corrupted by All For One. A wave of nausea washed over him, quickly replaced by a surge of grim determination. This wasn't just a villain. This was a direct, horrifying link to the past, to the very heart of the conflict that had consumed One For All's legacy.

Aizawa, ever the pragmatist, ignored the villain's theatrics. His eyes glowed, his scarf twitching. "What's your endgame, Shigaraki? What do you hope to achieve with this, chaos?"

Tomura Shigaraki let out a dry, unsettling chuckle, scratching violently at his neck. "Chaos? Oh, yes. Plain and simple. To tear down this pathetic hero society. To show the world how fragile their peace truly is. And to cripple the next generation of heroes, if not snuff them out entirely." His gaze lingered on Izuku for a moment, a predatory glint in his eyes. "But most importantly, to kill All Might. Where is he? Did he run away?"

Aizawa's lips thinned into a grim line. "You'll be sorely disappointed," he growled, his body coiling, ready to spring. He knew he was outmatched, but he wouldn't back down. He needed to buy time for backup to arrive, for the students to escape.

With a burst of speed, Aizawa launched his capture scarf, aiming to ensnare both Tomura and Kurogiri. His Quirk flared, attempting to erase their abilities. He moved with caution, not wanting to risk a direct attack against unknown Quirks, choosing to subdue them first.

But as the capture tape wrapped around Tomura's arm, a chilling grin spread across the villain's face. "Too slow, Eraser Head."

Before Aizawa could fully tighten his grip, Tomura's free hand, covered in its ghastly five-fingered glove, reached out and touched the capture tape.

In an instant, the durable, high-tech fabric began to crumble, disintegrating into dust with horrifying speed. The effect spread, racing up the scarf towards Aizawa's arm, a clear demonstration of Tomura's devastating decay Quirk.

Aizawa's eyes widened in alarm, forced to release his grip and leap back, narrowly avoiding the spreading decay. The air crackled with a new, terrifying tension. The battle had just escalated.

The scattered students continued their desperate struggles, each facing overwhelming odds.

Conflagration Zone: Sero, Shoji, Sato, and Koda

Hanta Sero, Mezo Shoji, Rikido Sato, and Koji Koda found themselves in the Conflagration Zone, a landscape of searing heat and choking smoke. Sero immediately used his Tape Quirk to create a makeshift barrier, attempting to block off a path for the villains, but the heat was intense.

"It's too hot to breathe!" Sato gasped, his usually calm demeanor strained as he felt his sugar-fueled strength waning in the oppressive heat.

"We need to find a way out of here!" Shoji shouted, his Dupli-Arms lashing out to deflect a fiery projectile from a villain.

Koda, usually timid, found himself forced to act. He began communicating with the few animals that could survive in this environment, trying to get them to distract or mislead the villains. Birds, their feathers singed, squawked and flew erratically, causing minor diversions.

A villain with a heat-absorbing Quirk lunged at Sero, melting through his tape. "You kids are slow-roasting today!" he cackled.

Sero, thinking fast, wrapped his tape around a crumbling pillar, swinging himself and Shoji out of the villain's reach. "This way!"

Sato, with a burst of renewed strength, punched a villain with a fire Quirk, sending him stumbling into a wall of flames. But the heat was relentless, and more villains were appearing from the smoky haze. They were surviving, but barely, constantly forced to retreat and find new defensive positions.

Ruins Zone: Ochako, Kaminari

Ochako Uraraka landed with a soft thump in the dilapidated Ruins Zone, a maze of crumbling buildings and debris. Denki Kaminari landed nearby, looking disoriented.

"Ugh, my head's still spinning," Kaminari groaned, shaking his head. "Where are we?"

Suddenly, villains emerged from the shadows of the crumbling structures. Some were stealthy, others bulky, their Quirks designed for ambush and close-quarters combat.

"Looks like we got some fresh meat!" one villain snarled, his body rippling with enhanced muscle.

"Stay close, Kaminari!" Ochako yelled, touching a large piece of rubble, making it float. "We can use the environment to our advantage!"

Kaminari, seeing the approaching villains, instinctively unleashed a burst of electricity. "Indiscriminate Shock: 1.3 Million Volts!"

The electricity arced wildly, striking several villains and sending them twitching, but also narrowly missing Ochako.

Ochako, meanwhile, was using her Zero Gravity to lift debris and hurl it at the villains, creating diversions and temporary barriers. She was quick on her feet, dodging attacks and trying to keep the villains off balance.

They were fighting defensively, trying to survive the onslaught and find a way to regroup. Kaminari was struggling to control his Quirk without hitting his allies, and Ochako was constantly on the move, using her Quirk to create openings and escape routes.

Downpour Zone: Shoji, Tokoyami, and Hagakure

In the perpetually raining Downpour Zone, Mezo Shoji, Fumikage Tokoyami, and Toru Hagakure were battling a group of agile, water-based villains. Shoji's Dupli-Arms provided excellent defense, but Dark Shadow was struggling in the wet, dimly lit environment.

"Dark Shadow is weaker in the rain!" Tokoyami grunted, his Quirk recoiling slightly from a villain's water whip. "We need more light!"

"I'm trying to distract them!" Hagakure's voice called out, her invisible form splashing through puddles as she tried to land kicks. But her movements were less effective on the slick surfaces.

A villain with a water-jet Quirk blasted a powerful stream at Shoji, forcing him to brace with all his arms. "You can't hide forever, invisible girl!"

Shoji, realizing their disadvantage, began to use his Dupli-Arms to create larger, more opaque shields, trying to block the rain and provide Dark Shadow with more darkness to operate in. He was a living fortress, but the villains were relentless, chipping away at their defenses. They were fighting a desperate, uphill battle against an environment that favored their enemies.

Central Plaza: Iida

Tenya Iida, having been tasked with seeking help, was racing through the USJ's main corridor, his Recipro Burst Quirk propelling him at incredible speeds. He was the fastest among them, and their only hope for reinforcements.

"I must reach the school! I must alert the teachers!" he chanted to himself, his engines roaring. He dodged stray villains, his movements precise and focused, his mind solely on his mission.

He could hear the distant sounds of battle—the shouts of his classmates, the explosions, the crumbling debris. Each sound fueled his determination. He knew his friends were fighting for their lives, and it was up to him to bring back help. He was a beacon of hope, a single, determined streak of blue and white against the chaos.

Aizawa, now wary of Tomura's decay Quirk, shifted his focus. His primary target remained Kurogiri, the warp gate villain, as disabling him was crucial to cutting off the League's escape route and preventing further reinforcements. But Tomura Shigaraki, despite his gaunt appearance, proved surprisingly quick and agile, constantly moving to intercept Aizawa's attacks and shield Kurogiri.

"You're predictable, Eraser Head," Tomura rasped, his voice a dry whisper as he ducked under a sweeping kick from Aizawa, then lunged forward, his decaying hand reaching out. "Always trying to erase Quirks. But some things... can't be erased."

Aizawa's eyes glowed, his hair floating as he dodged Tomura's attempts to touch him, his scarf lashing out to keep the villain at bay. He aimed for Kurogiri, but Tomura was always there, a blur of pale blue hair and grasping hands, forcing Aizawa to shift his focus to defense.

"Stay back, Midoriya-kun!" Aizawa yelled, knowing the boy's vulnerability to direct contact.

But Izuku, fueled by the chilling revelation of Tomura's identity, had already made his decision. This wasn't just a villain attack; this was personal. This was Nana's legacy, twisted and corrupted. He couldn't stand by.

In a flash of green, Izuku launched himself forward, bypassing Aizawa and aiming a powerful, Agito-enhanced kick directly at Tomura's side. The speed and force were unexpected, forcing Tomura to abandon his attack on Aizawa and twist awkwardly to dodge.

"Oh? A little hero trying to play big?" Tomura taunted, a hand scratching at his neck, his red eyes gleaming with malicious amusement. "You're just a child. You think you can stop me?" He lunged, his decaying hand reaching for Izuku's face. "Let's see how that pretty costume of yours holds up!"

Izuku, however, was faster. He weaved, ducked, and spun, his movements fluid and precise, narrowly avoiding Tomura's grasping fingers. Each dodge was followed by a rapid counter-attack, a flurry of punches and kicks aimed at Tomura's vitals. The villain was forced to continuously retreat, his taunts turning into grunts of frustration.

"You're quick, for a brat," Tomura hissed, his movements becoming more frantic as Izuku pressed his assault. The boy wasn't just strong; he was relentless, his attacks coming from unexpected angles, forcing Tomura to defend rather than attack.

An opening. A brief, almost imperceptible hesitation from Izuku as he shifted his weight for a powerful uppercut. Tomura saw it. With a burst of surprising speed, he lunged, his hand shooting out and grabbing Izuku's left shoulder.

"Got you!" Tomura snarled, a triumphant, chilling grin spreading across his face.

The moment his five fingers made contact, Izuku's hero costume began to decay. The dark fabric on his shoulder instantly discolored, turning brittle and crumbling into fine dust. The decay spread rapidly, eating away at the material, exposing the skin beneath.

But as the fabric dissolved, Izuku's eyes narrowed. He felt no pain, no burning sensation on his skin. With a guttural roar, he ignored the decaying costume and drove his right fist deep into Tomura Shigaraki's gut.

WHUMPH!

The blow was solid, carrying the full force of Izuku's Agito strength. Tomura's eyes widened in shock, his triumphant grin replaced by a gasp of agony. The air was knocked clean out of his lungs, and he doubled over, stumbling backward, releasing Izuku's shoulder.

Izuku immediately pulled back, his shoulder now bare where his costume had been. He quickly ran a hand over the exposed skin, his heart pounding. The fabric was gone, completely dissolved, but his skin beneath was perfectly intact, unblemished, not even a hint of redness.

Aizawa, who had been watching the exchange with growing alarm, let out a small gasp of surprise. Thirteen, behind them, also seemed stunned.

Tomura, still clutching his stomach, glared at Izuku, his red eyes blazing with a mixture of pain and disbelief. "You... you little brat! What was that?!" He hadn't expected the punch, nor the bizarre resistance to his Quirk.

Izuku, though shaken by the close call, felt a surge of adrenaline. His Agito power had protected him. He was immune to Tomura's decay. This changed everything.

Tomura Shigaraki stumbled back, clutching his stomach, his red eyes wide with a mixture of pain and utter disbelief. He had expected Izuku's costume to decay, to see the boy scream in agony as his flesh crumbled. Instead, nothing. Just a powerful punch that had winded him completely.

"What... what are you?" Tomura rasped, his voice a strained whisper, his fingers twitching as if still trying to comprehend the failed decay.

Izuku stood firm, his bare shoulder a stark contrast to the shredded fabric of his suit. His green eyes, usually so expressive, were now cold and resolute. He didn't answer Tomura's question. Instead, a faint, almost imperceptible hum began to emanate from his body.

Aizawa, seeing Tomura's confusion and Izuku's strange resilience, quickly moved to capitalize on the opening, launching his scarf again towards Kurogiri. But before he could connect, Tomura, still reeling, snarled.

"Nomu!" Tomura screeched, his voice raw with frustration and a sudden, chilling desperation. "Kill him! Kill Eraser Head!"

From a dark, shadowy corner of the Central Plaza, a hulking, monstrous figure emerged. It was a creature of nightmare: massive, with exposed brain matter, a bird-like beak, and grotesque, bulging muscles. This was the Nomu, a bio-engineered weapon, specifically designed to counter All Might.

The Nomu let out a guttural roar, its red eyes fixed on Aizawa. It moved with terrifying speed, a blur of raw power, closing the distance in an instant.

"Aizawa-sensei, look out!" Izuku yelled, recognizing the sheer destructive potential of the creature.

Aizawa, reacting instinctively, tried to erase the Nomu's Quirk, but the creature merely shrugged off his gaze, its immense fist slamming into Aizawa's arm with a sickening crack. The hero cried out, his arm twisting at an unnatural angle, his eyes widening in pain and shock. The Nomu was completely unaffected by his Quirk.

"He... he's Quirkless?" Aizawa gasped, clutching his broken arm, forced back by the Nomu's brutal strength.

"Not quite, Eraser Head. More like engineered! That's the anti-Symbol of Peace weapon, Nomu," Tomura explained, a cruel smile returning to his face as he watched Aizawa suffer. "He has multiple Quirks. Super Regeneration, Shock Absorption... and he's been customized to take down All Might."

Izuku's mind raced. Multiple Quirks? Immune to Erasure? This was a threat on an entirely different level. But as the Nomu turned its attention to Aizawa, preparing another devastating blow, a primal instinct surged through Izuku. He wouldn't let his teacher fall.

A radiant golden aura enveloped Izuku, intensifying with each passing moment. His form underwent a dramatic metamorphosis, muscles coiling and shifting beneath his skin. The remnants of his tattered hero suit dissolved, replaced by a formidable, sleek black armor. This new plating was intricately segmented, highlighting a powerful, defined musculature. Across his chest and upper back, a grand, sculpted golden plate emerged, its surface gleaming. His forearms and shins were similarly encased in solid, gleaming gold. At his waist, a prominent golden belt buckle, bearing a unique golden symbol, solidified into place. Finally, his head was consumed by the transformation: a sleek, black helmet, crowned by a majestic, crescent-shaped golden crest, now adorned him. From its visor, two large, intensely crimson lenses fixed their gaze forward.

His nervous system, usually a complex web of signals, now functioned with an almost supernatural clarity. Every nerve ending became a sensor, processing environmental data at an accelerated rate. His muscles, already enhanced, began to contract and expand with unprecedented efficiency, ready for explosive bursts of speed and power. His senses sharpened to an almost painful degree: the faint scent of ozone from the Nomu's movements, the subtle vibrations of its footsteps on the ground, the minute shifts in air pressure as it moved. His brain, typically overwhelmed by sensory input, seamlessly integrated it, creating a real-time, three-dimensional map of the battle.

"Leave him alone!" Izuku roared, his voice deeper, resonating with a new power. He launched himself at the Nomu, a black and gold bullet.

The Nomu, surprised by the sudden, powerful attack, turned just as Izuku's armored fist connected with its side. The impact sent a shockwave through the plaza, cracking the ground beneath them. The Nomu stumbled, grunting, but didn't fall. Its shock absorption Quirk was formidable.

Izuku pressed his attack, a flurry of rapid, powerful blows. He aimed for exposed areas, for joints, for anything that might disrupt its balance. He moved with a speed that blurred his form, his body adapting to the Nomu's movements, predicting its counter-attacks. His senses fed him information: the slight shift in the Nomu's weight before it swung, the faint tremor in the ground that indicated its next step, the subtle change in air density as it prepared to unleash a powerful breath. His muscles responded instantly, adjusting his stance, his angle of attack, his defensive posture.

He was holding his own, a small, armored figure against a monstrous behemoth. Each punch he landed, each kick he delivered, was meant to disorient, to create an opening, to buy time. He wasn't trying to defeat it; he was trying to survive, to protect Aizawa, to hold the line until help arrived.

The Nomu roared in frustration, its blows becoming more wild, more powerful. It slammed its massive fist down, creating a crater where Izuku had been a split second before. Izuku dodged, his body twisting in mid-air, a flash of black and gold. He landed a solid kick to the Nomu's knee, forcing it to buckle slightly.

Tomura Shigaraki watched, his face a mask of furious disbelief. "What is this?! Why hasn't he decayed already?! And that... that power! He's not supposed to be this strong!"

Just as the Nomu recovered and lunged at Izuku with renewed ferocity, a thunderous BOOM echoed through the USJ Dome. The main entrance, a massive steel door, was blown inward, sending debris scattering.

Standing in the newly formed opening, silhouetted against the bright sunlight, was a figure larger than life, radiating an aura of immense power. It was All Might, back to his glorious prime, muscles bulging, his signature smile broad and confident, his eyes blazing with righteous fury.

"Have no fear, students!" All Might's voice boomed, filling the entire dome, a sound of hope and unwavering strength. "For I am here!"

His gaze swept across the scene, taking in the injured Aizawa, the struggling Izuku, and the monstrous Nomu. His smile hardened into a grimace of determination.

"You villains," All Might growled, his voice low and dangerous, "have made a grave mistake."

He launched himself forward, a golden streak of pure power.

The Nomu, sensing the immense threat, turned to face All Might, letting out another bestial roar.

All Might met its charge head-on.

First blow: A powerful right hook, "Detroit Smash," connected with the Nomu's jaw. The creature's head snapped back, but it remained standing, its shock absorption taking the brunt of the force.

Second blow: A rapid "Oklahoma Smash" to the Nomu's torso. The Nomu grunted, pushed back a few feet, but still held its ground.

Third blow: All Might twisted, delivering a devastating "Carolina Smash" across the Nomu's midsection. The Nomu staggered, a faint crack appearing in its grotesque skin.

Fourth blow: A furious "Texas Smash" to the Nomu's head, followed by a powerful uppercut. The Nomu roared, its movements becoming sluggish, its shock absorption visibly struggling to cope with the sheer force.

Fifth blow: With a final, explosive cry of "PLUS ULTRA!", All Might wound up and delivered a monstrous "United States of Smash" directly into the Nomu's chest. The impact was cataclysmic. The ground beneath the Nomu shattered, and the creature's body, unable to absorb the overwhelming power, was sent hurtling upward, crashing through the ceiling of the USJ Dome and disappearing into the sky, defeated.

The silence that followed was deafening, broken only by the settling dust and the gasps of the remaining villains. All Might stood tall, his chest heaving slightly, but otherwise unharmed, a true Symbol of Peace restored.

Tomura Shigaraki, however, was not one of the stunned. His eyes, though wide with fury at the Nomu's defeat, quickly darted to Kurogiri. "Kurogiri! Now! Get us out of here!" he rasped, his voice a venomous whisper.

Kurogiri, ever the loyal subordinate, began to expand his warp gate, a swirling vortex of dark mist forming around them. Tomura took a step towards it, his hand already outstretched, a desperate, frantic energy about him.

But before the mist could fully envelop them, a blur of black and gold shot forward. It was Izuku, moving with a speed and precision that defied the recent chaos. His armored fist, imbued with the Agito's power, connected with a sickening thud against Kurogiri's solid neck. The warp villain's mist form wavered, then collapsed, his metallic neck brace clattering against the ground as he fell, unconscious.

"Kurogiri!" Tomura shrieked, his eyes widening in disbelief and rage. He spun, his decaying hand reaching out, fingers splayed, aimed directly at the armored Izuku. "You... you little brat! I'll disintegrate you!"

Izuku didn't flinch. As Tomura lunged, the Agito's enhanced reflexes kicked in. In a motion too fast for the eye to follow, Izuku intercepted Tomura's attacking arm, twisting it sharply. A swift, precise strike to the back of Tomura's head, and the villain's eyes rolled back. Tomura Shigaraki crumpled to the ground, his body going limp.

As Tomura fell, Izuku's crimson visor seemed to pierce the villain's obscured face. A thought, cold and heavy, settled in his mind: This is Tenko Shimura. Nana-san's grandson. The weight of that realization, the sheer, tragic irony of it, was a bitter taste in his mouth.

All Might, having recovered from his final attack, strode towards Izuku, his powerful form casting a long shadow. He knelt beside the boy, his voice filled with concern. "Midoriya, my boy! Are you alright? That was... incredible! Are you injured?"

Izuku turned, his helmeted head dipping slightly. He pointed a gauntleted finger down at the unconscious form of Tomura Shigaraki. "All Might... he's the one who led the attack." His voice was low, strained, the revelation heavy on his tongue. "This... this is Tenko Shimura. Nana-san's grandson."

All Might's eyes, wide with relief moments before, now snapped open in profound, disbelieving shock. His massive frame stiffened, and a deep, guttural gasp escaped his lips. The name "Tenko Shimura" hung in the air, a devastating echo that shattered the last vestiges of the battle's triumph.

All Might froze, his massive frame casting a long shadow over the broken plaza. His trademark grin—his very symbol of hope—faltered for a fraction of a second.

"Tenko… Shimura?" His voice cracked, barely audible over the settling rubble.

Izuku didn't speak again. His glowing red visor faced All Might, unmoving. Behind it, his jaw tightened. This wasn't the time for sympathy; this was war.

For a long, tense moment, All Might stared at the unconscious Tomura, his mind caught between the battle just won and the bitter truth of his predecessor's bloodline. His fist trembled at his side, and for once, he didn't know whether to clench it in anger or despair.

Aizawa's voice finally cut through the silence, gruff and businesslike, pulling them both back to reality.

"Symbol of Peace or not, he's still the enemy. Midoriya, keep him restrained. We can deal with family histories later."

Izuku gave a small nod. "Understood."

He crouched beside Tomura, tightening the metallic bracers on his wrists and ankles with calculated precision, every motion almost mechanical. If Tomura woke up, he wouldn't be moving any time soon.

All Might straightened, forcing his composure back into place. The wide smile returned, though it didn't reach his eyes. He spoke louder, for the students who might still be listening from the other zones.

"Don't worry, everyone! The villains have been subdued! U.A. will protect you!"

The words rang strong, confident, but Izuku could hear the strain beneath them.

From the corner of his eye, Izuku noticed something else—Shigaraki's fingers twitching slightly despite his unconscious state. It wasn't much, but it made his stomach tighten.

Before he could dwell on it, Aizawa's sharp voice snapped him back.

"Midoriya. The students are still scattered. Move. Help Thirteen secure the rest of the plaza."

Izuku rose without a word. His armor shimmered faintly as it retracted in sections, leaving him once more in his tattered suit, his expression carefully neutral.

As he turned to go, All Might's voice stopped him for just a moment.

"Midoriya."

Izuku looked back.

All Might hesitated, his blue eyes shadowed. "…We'll talk about this later. About… Tenko."

Izuku gave him the smallest of nods, then sprinted off toward the nearest collapsing zone, his movements a blur of black and green.

Elsewhere…

The soft hum of life-support machinery filled the otherwise silent chamber. All For One stood before a single glowing monitor, hands clasped behind his back, his mask reflecting the pale light.

The report had just come through from the few surviving operatives who had managed to flee before U.A.'s lockdown sealed the area.

Tomura Shigaraki—captured. Kurogiri—incapacitated and arrested. The Nomu—defeated and restrained by U.A. staff.

All For One said nothing for a long moment.

At last, his voice came, smooth and measured, carrying not anger, but a quiet, clinical disappointment.

"Tomura… apprehended. Kurogiri as well." His head tilted slightly, almost in mild curiosity. "The Nomu was engineered specifically to kill All Might at full capacity. It should not have been possible for them to contain it."

The voice on the other end of the communication device stammered, a hint of desperation in its tone. "U.A.'s response was… faster than expected. Eraserhead was already engaging multiple targets, and there were—there were students interfering. One in particular—"

All For One's head lifted slightly, an imperceptible shift of his masked gaze. "Students?"

"Yes. First-years. But… there was one. Green, fast, efficient. We don't know his name, but—he fought like he wasn't a student at all. He… distracted the Nomu long enough for U.A. staff to regain control of the plaza."

All For One remained silent for several seconds, the soft hiss of his respirator the only sound, as if replaying that statement in his mind, dissecting every word.

"…A student interfering with a Nomu designed to counter All Might." His tone was quiet, thoughtful, a dangerous undercurrent beneath the calm. "That is… unexpected."

He moved closer to the console, his gloved hand tapping a single command to bring up a rough still image transmitted from the fleeing operatives. It was grainy and blurred by motion, but the flash of green was unmistakable, a vibrant anomaly in the chaos.

All For One studied the image, saying nothing for a long moment before murmuring, almost to himself, a question hanging heavy in the air.

"Who are you?"

He straightened at last, turning from the screen, his hands once again folding behind his back. His voice was calm, almost casual, but carried an unmistakable weight, a chilling directive.

"Find out who that boy is. His name, his Quirk, his training. Everything. Tomura's failure can be corrected, but this… this variable must be accounted for before it grows into something more problematic."

The surviving operative on the other end hesitated, a nervous cough audible. "And Tomura, sir? What are your orders regarding him?"

All For One's head tilted slightly, a gesture that conveyed both dismissal and a deeper, more sinister calculation.

"Leave him where he is. For now. Capture will temper him in ways my words cannot."

With that, the communication cut. The lair fell silent again, save for the hum of the machines, as All For One turned back to the blurred still image, staring at it as if willing it to yield its secrets.

"…Unexpected," he murmured once more, a single, chilling word, before the screen dimmed to black.

The central plaza of the USJ had fallen into an eerie quiet. Most of the police transports had already departed, leaving only the low hum of equipment and the occasional barked order from clean-up crews. Smoke curled lazily from shattered pillars, and the metallic tang of blood lingered faintly in the air.

Kagutsuchi strolled across the debris-strewn floor, a mop slung casually over one shoulder, his janitor's uniform looking absurdly mundane against the backdrop of destruction. His golden eyes swept over the scene, lingering briefly on the scorched walls and shattered tiles, as if cataloging the chaos with detached amusement.

Then he spotted him.

Izuku sat on a cracked stairwell off to the side of the plaza, his arms resting on his knees. His uniform was torn, his gloves scuffed, but his posture was calm—too calm for someone who had just fought for his life. No one paid him any attention; the pro heroes were focused on coordinating transport, and the students had been herded away for medical checks.

Kagutsuchi walked over, his boots crunching over broken tile. He stopped a few feet away, leaning lazily on his mop handle.

"Well," he drawled, "look at you, sitting there all quiet like none of this happened. Not bad for a kid who just went toe-to-toe with one of All For One's pets."

Izuku looked up briefly, his expression unreadable. "…I did what was necessary."

Kagutsuchi smirked. "Necessary. Right. You're lucky no one's really thinking about what they saw. A first-year fighting like that? You're already halfway to sticking out like a sore thumb."

"I didn't do it for recognition," Izuku replied flatly.

"Good." Kagutsuchi's tone shifted, the teasing edge fading into something quieter, almost serious. "Keep it that way. Because you don't want him looking at you."

Izuku's gaze sharpened slightly. "…All For One."

"Mm." Kagutsuchi nodded, tapping the mop against the broken floor. "The guy's like a parasite. Once something catches his attention, he doesn't let go. Doesn't matter if you're a threat or just… interesting. Either way, he'll dig in and tear apart everything around you just to see what makes you tick."

Izuku's jaw tightened, but his voice stayed calm. "…And you think today caught his attention."

Kagutsuchi chuckled, low and humorless. "You swatted at his Nomu and helped turn his perfect little bloodbath into a total failure. Of course he noticed. That's what he does—he watches. And when he decides you're worth it…" He snapped his fingers, the sound sharp in the still air. "…everything you care about starts rotting."

For a moment, neither spoke.

Finally, Izuku said, voice low but certain, "I'll handle it."

Kagutsuchi tilted his head, studying him for a moment before grinning, amused despite himself. "Oh, I don't doubt it. But don't make it easier for him. Play the quiet little hero. Keep your head down. Stay boring, kid. And, maybe he'll find someone else to play with."

Izuku didn't answer. He just pushed himself up from the stairwell, nodding once before walking past him, his steps measured and steady.

Kagutsuchi watched him go, leaning back on his mop with a small, amused snort.

"Cold, calm, and stubborn," he murmured to himself. "You're getting better at this… but don't get cocky. Parasites love shiny things."

The once-grand central plaza of the USJ now looked like a battlefield. Smoke curled lazily from shattered pillars, and the metallic scent of blood mixed with the acrid stench of burnt flooring. Villains lay strewn across the ground, groaning or unconscious, while squads of police and U.A. security personnel moved to corral them.

Uniformed officers moved efficiently, snapping Quirk-suppressant cuffs onto every restrained villain, dragging them into orderly lines near the plaza's edge. Pro heroes barked instructions, their voices firm but calm, trying to keep the controlled chaos from spiraling.

But amid the subdued mutterings and the hum of rescue efforts, one voice tore through the air like nails on glass.

"LET ME GO! YOU FILTHY NOBODIES—YOU'RE ALL DEAD! DO YOU HEAR ME? DEAD!"

Tomura Shigaraki thrashed violently as four officers wrestled him to the ground, struggling to secure the specialized restraints designed for him. His bloodshot eyes darted wildly, his face twisted into a mask of unhinged fury.

"I'LL KILL YOU! I'LL KILL EVERY SINGLE ONE OF YOU! YOU THINK THIS CHANGES ANYTHING?!" His voice cracked, growing shriller as he bucked against their hold, kicking out at anyone who got too close.

The officers didn't react to his screaming, focused only on their work. Two of them pinned his arms while another carefully locked the thick, padded gauntlets around his hands, encasing his fingers separately to prevent any direct contact. A final restraint locked around his neck and shoulders, bolted to his wrist cuffs with reinforced plating, severely limiting his range of motion.

Shigaraki fought them every step of the way, his movements wild and jerky, a froth of pure rage bubbling from him.

"COWARDS! YOU THINK YOU CAN JUST—YOU'RE ALL SO SMUG! YOU'LL SEE! YOU'LL ALL SEE!"

Nearby, Kurogiri sat on the ground, already secured. His posture, in stark contrast, was eerily calm, though his mist form flickered weakly, destabilized by the injuries sustained in the fight. Thick, reinforced metal bracers encased his neck and torso, lined with Quirk-suppressant emitters that forced his warp gate back into a dense, immobile core.

Two officers tightened the restraints further, checking them twice before stepping back.

Kurogiri's yellow eyes flicked toward Shigaraki, who continued thrashing and screaming like a rabid animal.

"…Tomura," Kurogiri rasped, his voice distorted and tired, "calm yourself. You're only making this worse."

"SHUT UP, KUROGIRI! DON'T TELL ME TO CALM DOWN!" Shigaraki roared, spittle flying as he struggled harder. "THEY THINK THEY WON! THEY THINK—THEY THINK THIS IS OVER! IT'S NOT OVER!"

Kurogiri said nothing after that, his gaze lowering as the officers finished securing him.

Aizawa stood a few paces away, his scarf hanging loosely around his neck, his usual impassive expression betraying only mild annoyance as Shigaraki's screams continued. Thirteen, her suit patched but intact, quietly coordinated with the arriving medical staff, her calm demeanor a sharp contrast to the chaos around her.

And standing slightly apart from the rest, Izuku watched silently, his expression unreadable. His eyes followed Shigaraki for a brief moment—devoid of anger, free of pity, just… observation.

Shigaraki's screaming reached a fever pitch as officers hauled him upright, locking him to a reinforced gurney for transport.

"ALL MIGHT! BEETLE BOY! I'LL RIP YOU APART! I'LL RIP EVERYONE APART! DO YOU HEAR ME?!"

Izuku didn't flinch. His gaze was calm, detached, even as Shigaraki's bloodshot eyes locked on him, hatred radiating from every word.

The police ignored the outburst, forcing Shigaraki down as he thrashed against the restraints. His screams echoed through the plaza, a chilling testament to his fury, long after he was dragged toward the awaiting transport.

A few meters away, near a partially collapsed wall, Toshinori Yagi stood beside Detective Naomasa Tsukauchi and Shota Aizawa. Toshinori's muscle form, though still present, seemed to sag slightly, his shoulders hunched. He watched Shigaraki's furious, desperate struggle with a mixture of profound disappointment and a cold, bitter disgust.

"To think," Toshinori murmured, his voice a low rumble, devoid of its usual booming cheer. "To think this is what he's become. Nana… if only you could see him now."

Naomasa, ever the professional, continued taking notes, his expression grim. "He's a product of All For One's influence, Toshinori. Years of manipulation, of having his worst impulses nurtured."

Aizawa, his capture scarf still draped around his neck, merely grunted. "Product or not, he's dangerous. And unstable. We were lucky to contain him without more casualties." His eyes, usually half-lidded, were sharp, scanning the remaining cleanup efforts. "The students handled themselves well, considering. Especially Midoriya."

Toshinori's gaze flickered to Izuku, who was still standing a little apart, watching the last of the villains being loaded. A faint, almost imperceptible tremor went through Toshinori's broad frame.

"Midoriya-kun…" he began, then trailed off, a complex swirl of emotions in his usually bright blue eyes. Pride, yes, but also a fresh wave of concern. He knew the Agito power was formidable, but the implications of its origin, and Kagutsuchi's involvement, weighed heavily on him.

Naomasa sighed, running a hand through his hair. "This whole incident… it's far more complicated than a simple villain attack. All For One's direct involvement, the Nomu, and now… the Agito. We're dealing with something on a scale we haven't seen in decades."

"Indeed," Aizawa agreed, his voice flat. "And it seems we've only just scratched the surface." He looked back at Shigaraki's receding form, then at Toshinori, a shared, unspoken understanding passing between the two heroes. "This isn't over. Not by a long shot."

Toshinori clenched his fists, the muscles in his forearms bulging. His gaze hardened, no longer filled with disappointment, but with a renewed resolve. "No," he affirmed, his voice gaining a touch of its old strength. "It is not."

The sun hung low in the sky, staining the U.A. courtyard in pale orange. The students of Class 1-A trickled out of the main building, most of them quiet, their usual chatter replaced by subdued murmurs. Bandages peeked from under sleeves and pant legs; the lingering weight of the USJ attack clung to them like a persistent shadow.

Izuku walked alone, his hands tucked into his pockets, his gaze fixed on the ground ahead. His movements were steady, deliberate—a calm that felt almost alien among his shaken classmates. The bandages on his knuckles were the only visible reminder of his actions that day.

He had almost reached the front gates when the sound of hurried footsteps and an all-too-familiar voice cut through the quiet.

"HEY! DEKU!"

Izuku stopped, lifting his head slightly as Bakugo stormed toward him. His uniform jacket hung open, hands shoved aggressively into his pockets, but his expression was a conflicted storm. His usual glare burned with questions he clearly didn't want to ask, yet couldn't stop himself from voicing.

Bakugo planted himself squarely in Izuku's path, a deep scowl etched on his face.

"I heard some crap from the others," Bakugo snapped, his voice sharp, though lacking its usual explosive volume. "Said you fought alongside Eraserhead. That you were—what—the one who helped hold off that big freak they brought to kill All Might?"

Izuku's expression remained unreadable. "…I did what I had to do."

"Don't give me that crap, nerd!" Bakugo barked, taking a step closer, his voice cracking slightly—not from anger, but from a raw, unacknowledged frustration. "You don't just 'do what you have to do' and go toe-to-toe with something like that! You—"

He stopped mid-rant, his hands clenching tightly in his pockets. His scowl twitched, his voice dropping lower, almost hesitant.

"…So what the hell happened, huh? You suddenly grow a spine or something? Since when can you fight like that?!"

Izuku studied him quietly, his calm only serving to fuel Bakugo's visible agitation.

"I'm asking you a question, damn it!" Bakugo snapped again, his usual explosive tone finally creeping back into his voice. "How the hell were you—"

Izuku finally spoke, his tone flat and almost dismissive.

"…It doesn't matter."

Bakugo blinked, his scowl faltering slightly. "…What?"

"It doesn't matter how I fought," Izuku said, his voice level, his gaze steady. "The villains are gone. Everyone's safe. That's all that matters."

Bakugo stared at him, momentarily stunned into silence, as if trying to process the calm, almost bored dismissal. Then his scowl returned, sharper than before, but there was a flicker of something else in his eyes—something he didn't want to admit, a hint of grudging respect or bewilderment.

"Don't you talk to me like that, damn it," Bakugo growled, though his voice lacked its usual conviction. "You—You don't get to act all cool and quiet like some pro already!"

Izuku didn't reply. He simply stepped past Bakugo, his hands still in his pockets, his voice drifting over his shoulder as he walked away.

"…Go home, Bakugo. You're tired."

Bakugo turned sharply, his fists clenching, but for once he didn't move, didn't follow. He just stood there, glaring after Izuku as he walked steadily down the path, his back straight and his steps unhurried.

The quiet of the evening settled heavily over Musutafu. Ochako Uraraka sat cross-legged on her bed, still wrapped in her U.A. gym sweats, a blanket draped around her shoulders. Her phone was pressed to her ear, Momo Yaoyorozu's composed but subdued voice crackling faintly on the other end.

"…They wouldn't stop hugging me," Ochako said with a sheepish, tired laugh. "My parents, I mean. The second I walked in the door, my mom practically crushed me. I think she was crying more than I was."

Momo exhaled softly. "That's understandable. The broadcasts made the whole incident sound catastrophic. My parents were… extremely alarmed as well. I had to reassure them repeatedly before they let me off the phone."

"Yeah… guess we all scared them pretty bad," Ochako murmured, her smile fading as she tugged her blanket tighter. "I knew hero work would be dangerous, but this? I didn't think we'd be fighting for our lives this soon."

"The attack was far beyond anything first-years should have been subjected to," Momo agreed, her tone firm but tinged with quiet worry.

For a moment, neither spoke. Then Ochako hesitated, lowering her voice.

"…Hey, Momo… you heard what the others were saying, right? About Midoriya?"

There was a pause on the other end. "…Yes. Some of the rescue staff were speaking about it when we were being checked over. That he fought alongside Eraserhead and Thirteen."

"And that he…" Ochako bit her lip. "…that he held off that Nomu thing. Even if it was just for a little while."

Momo sighed quietly. "If that's true… that's not something any of us should be able to do. Especially not at our age. The Nomu was built to counter All Might."

Ochako swallowed, staring down at her blanket. "I saw him today, Momo. Not just how strong he was… but how he moved. It wasn't like he was guessing, or panicking. It was like he knew exactly what to do, like he'd been in fights like that before."

"Yes," Momo said softly. "I noticed the same thing. His movements were precise. Efficient. Not the frantic reaction of a student improvising… it was practiced."

The line went quiet for a moment before Ochako spoke again, her voice hesitant. "…Do you think it's gonna get worse? With the Lords out there?"

Momo didn't answer immediately. When she did, her tone was measured, thoughtful. "The Lords wouldn't work with villains like the League, I think. They wouldn't even consider it. From what we've seen so far, it wouldn't fit their nature."

Ochako frowned slightly. "…You think they'll still come after this?"

"That's what concerns me," Momo admitted. "The Lords have their own agenda, and whatever that agenda is… Midoriya-kun seems to be at the center of it."

Ochako's grip tightened around her phone. "…He shouldn't have to fight things like that. Not yet. None of us should."

"No," Momo agreed softly. "But if they're moving now, then whatever they want is far more important than anything we can understand. And if they're watching him…" She trailed off, her voice dipping even lower. "…then I fear this was only the beginning."

The two girls stayed quiet for a while, the faint static on the line the only sound between them. Neither said it aloud, but both were thinking the same thing—Izuku Midoriya had already stepped into something far bigger than U.A., and whatever came next… it wouldn't stop at villains.

The apartment was quiet now, save for the distant hum of city traffic outside the window. The only light came from the small lamp on the coffee table, casting a warm glow over the modest living room. Izuku sat on the couch, hunched slightly forward, a roll of fresh bandages in his lap.

His hands moved with careful precision, wrapping his knuckles in neat layers. His expression was calm, almost detached, but his mind wasn't on the bandages—it was on the way his mother had reacted the moment he walked through the door.

Inko Midoriya had all but tackled him the second he stepped inside.

She'd cried so hard he half-wondered if she might flood the apartment with her tears, clinging to him like she was terrified he'd vanish if she let go. Her words had come out in a frantic rush, tripping over themselves—" I saw the news, Izuku! You were there! Are you hurt? Are you eating enough? They said students were attacked, I thought I— "

He'd tried to reassure her, telling her it was fine, that he was fine, but it only seemed to make her cry harder. It had taken nearly an hour to calm her down, and even then, she'd sat beside him at dinner, sniffling into a tissue and reaching over to check his bandages every few minutes as if making sure he wouldn't fall apart.

Izuku's hands stilled for a moment, resting on the fresh wrap around his right knuckle. A faint smile tugged at his lips—not amused, but… something softer.

"Mom…" he murmured quietly to himself, shaking his head just slightly.

She didn't know. She couldn't know. What he'd done at USJ, what he really was now—it would only terrify her more. He'd given her the simplest explanation he could, just enough to calm her. The truth—that he had fought a creature designed to kill All Might and survived—was something she didn't need to carry.

His gaze drifted to the faint reflection in the darkened window, catching his own eyes staring back at him. Kagutsuchi's words replayed in his mind.

"The guy's like a parasite. Once something catches his attention, he doesn't let go."

All For One. And the Lords. Both were dangerous in their own ways, and now both might be watching him.

Izuku exhaled slowly, finishing the last wrap around his knuckles and tugging it snug.

"Stay boring," Kagutsuchi had said. Play the quiet hero.

He stood, turning off the lamp, the room falling into a comfortable darkness. His mother was already asleep in her room, no doubt still exhausted from the emotional storm she'd unleashed earlier.

As he headed toward his bedroom, his steps were silent, measured, the same way they had been all day.

He'd stay boring. For now. But deep down, he knew it was only a matter of time before neither the Lords nor All For One would leave him that choice.

The holding cell was dim, lit only by a single strip of harsh white light along the ceiling. Reinforced restraints locked Tomura Shigaraki to a bolted-down chair, his padded gauntlets encasing each finger individually, leaving him unable to scratch or claw at anything. The heavy collar around his neck connected to his wrists with thick, suppressive plating, forcing his hunched posture.

But even bound, he couldn't stop moving.

His leg bounced erratically, his shoulders twitching as he glared down at the cold floor. His breath came in sharp, uneven bursts, and his lips curled back in a snarl every few seconds, as though his fury was too much for his body to contain.

"All Might…" he hissed under his breath, his voice hoarse from screaming during the transport. "Smiling. Always smiling like everything's fine…"

His head jerked up suddenly, bloodshot eyes staring at the blank wall ahead. His fingers twitched uselessly against the restraints.

"…And him."

The word was spat with venom, his cracked lips curling into something between a sneer and a grimace.

That green blur. That armored freak.

Beetle Boy.

The memory flashed through his mind, every frame seared into his hatred. A first-year student weaving through chaos like he belonged there, dodging blows meant for pros, even landing hits against the Nomu.

His jaw clenched so hard it hurt.

"That brat…" Tomura rasped, his breathing growing heavier. "That damn brat… acting like he's better. Like he can just jump in and ruin everything…!"

He jerked against the restraints suddenly, the chair scraping against the floor with a harsh screech. The motion was useless, but he didn't care. His breathing turned ragged, his voice rising.

"He wasn't supposed to be there! None of those extras were supposed to be there! Just All Might—just him!"

His rant dissolved into incoherent muttering, his head lowering, forehead almost touching his bound hands.

"…I'll kill him. I'll kill them both. I'll rip that stupid calm face right off his skull."

For a brief moment, his fury stilled, and his muttering grew quieter, more deliberate.

"…You think you're something special, don't you, brat? Fine. Fine. I'll show you. You're not a hero. You're nothing but another piece I'll grind into dust."

He chuckled then, a low, unhinged sound, his body trembling as the laughter built.

The guards stationed outside the observation window exchanged uneasy glances. One shifted uncomfortably.

"Creepy bastard's been at it for an hour straight," one muttered.

The other shook his head. "Just keep recording. Tsukauchi'll want every word of this."

Inside the cell, Tomura's laughter finally died down to ragged breathing, but the hatred in his eyes only sharpened. He sat there, trembling, his bloodshot gaze locked on nothing, yet seeing that green blur as vividly as if Izuku were standing in front of him.

He didn't care about the League. He didn't care about the failure of the mission anymore.

Now it was personal.

The staff room was quiet, lit only by the soft glow of a single lamp on the far table. Files were stacked high, reports from the USJ incident spread out between two tired men.

Toshinori Yagi sat hunched forward in his relaxed form, his long fingers steepled under his chin. His normally bright blue eyes were shadowed, his thoughts distant as he stared at a blurry photo of Tomura Shigaraki strapped to a transport gurney, still screaming as he was dragged away.

Across from him, Shota Aizawa flipped through a folder, his expression unreadable as always, though his tone carried a weight it didn't usually hold.

"They've got him locked down at a secure facility," Aizawa said flatly, his eyes scanning the page. "Maximum restraints, Quirk-suppressant gear, constant monitoring. And he's been… less than cooperative."

Toshinori's gaze didn't shift from the photo. "I heard he hasn't stopped shouting."

Aizawa closed the folder with a quiet snap. "Not shouting. Ranting. Pacing as much as the restraints will let him, muttering to himself when he's not threatening to kill everyone in sight."

Toshinori's jaw tightened slightly. "…Tenko Shimura."

Aizawa's eyes flicked up at that, watching Toshinori carefully.

"He's not Tenko anymore, Yagi," Aizawa said after a pause, his voice firm but not unkind. "Not your mentor's grandson. He's Tomura Shigaraki now, and whatever Tenko was… All For One's buried it deep."

Toshinori finally looked up, meeting Aizawa's gaze. "I can't just accept that, Shota. He's Nana's grandson. Her blood, her family. Somewhere in there—deep down—Tenko is still there."

Aizawa's expression didn't change, but his tone hardened slightly. "Even if he is, pulling him back isn't going to be easy. Or fast. The kid's completely unhinged. You didn't see him up close at USJ like I did. He wasn't just angry—he was feral. Years and years of manipulation have twisted him into something unstable. Without intensive psychological treatment, he's a danger to everyone around him."

Toshinori sat back slightly, his shoulders sagging as his eyes drifted back to the photo. "All For One… he really did a number on him."

"That's putting it mildly," Aizawa said, leaning back in his chair. "That man didn't just train him—he built him. Every insecurity, every resentment, every ounce of pain Tenko Shimura ever had was twisted into Tomura Shigaraki. That's not something we can fix overnight."

For a long moment, the room was quiet, the only sound the soft hum of the ceiling fan.

Finally, Toshinori spoke, his voice quieter this time. "…If there's even a chance, Shota, I have to try. Nana would want that. She'd want me to save him."

Aizawa didn't immediately reply. His eyes softened slightly—just slightly—but his tone remained realistic.

"Then you'd better be prepared for years of work. Because that's what it's going to take. And even then… it might not be enough."

Toshinori nodded slowly, his gaze still lingering on the photo.

But before the silence could settle again, Aizawa spoke, his tone shifting slightly, more pointed now.

"Speaking of kids who've caught the wrong kind of attention… Midoriya."

Toshinori looked up at that, blinking. "Midoriya-kun?"

"I saw how he fought today," Aizawa said flatly. "That wasn't a panicked student lashing out. That was calculated. Practiced. He fought like someone who's been in life-or-death situations before."

Toshinori didn't deny it. He sat back, exhaling slowly. "…Yes. I figure."

"And if we noticed," Aizawa continued, "so did other people. All For One doesn't miss things like that."

Toshinori's brows furrowed at that, his usual optimism tempered by a grim weight. "…You think he'll move on him?"

"I think he's already watching," Aizawa said simply. "If Midoriya can do that at his age, he's not just a promising student anymore. He's a variable. And people like All For One hate variables."

Toshinori's gaze drifted downward again, but this time it wasn't Tomura's photo he saw—it was Izuku's calm face after the battle, his expression far too steady for a boy his age.

"…Then we'll protect him," Toshinori said finally, an already aforementioned vow, his voice firm, almost as if trying to reassure himself. "No matter what."

Aizawa didn't argue, but his silence said enough. Protection might not be enough, not if All For One truly set his sights on the boy.

The weight of that unspoken thought hung heavy between them as the room fell into silence once more.

The classroom was an unnatural tomb that morning. The usual boisterous chatter, the playful teasing, had been replaced by a silence so profound it felt like a physical weight, a thick, suffocating fog clinging to the students of Class 1-A.

Pale faces and haunted eyes betrayed the sleepless nights. Some students huddled in hushed whispers, their gazes darting nervously toward the door, as if expecting the nightmare to walk back in.

Ochako sat rigidly at her desk, her hands fiddling incessantly with her pen, her brow deeply furrowed, a faint tremor in her fingers. Beside her, Momo, usually the picture of composure, held herself with an almost brittle perfection, her expression etched with a gravity that spoke of profound unease. Across the room, Jirou leaned in close to Kaminari, her voice barely a breath.

"I overheard Recovery Girl and Aizawa-sensei yesterday," Jirou whispered, her voice tight with disbelief. "She said Midoriya… he fought alongside Eraserhead. Like, a full-on, coordinated fight."

Kaminari's eyes widened, his voice dropping to a shocked near-inaudible murmur. "Wait—seriously? But he's… he's just a kid. A first-year. Like us."

Jirou gave him a stark, unsettling look. "You didn't see him, did you? The way he moved at USJ? That wasn't just instinct, Kaminari. That was… something else. Something trained."

Kaminari hesitated, a nervous hand raking through his hair. "Yeah, but… holding off that thing? That Nomu? People are actually saying that, right? That's… that's impossible."

"Depends on which pro you ask," Jirou replied, a shiver running through her. "Some are saying he actually managed to keep it distracted, bought time for the others to regroup, even landed hits."

Nearby, Mina whispered to Tsuyu, her usual cheer entirely absent, replaced by a mix of awe and profound disquiet. "I mean, I knew Midoriya was strong, but… that strong? Like, fighting-a-creature-designed-to-kill-All-Might strong?"

Tsuyu's wide, unblinking eyes seemed to hold a deeper understanding. "Ribbit… it doesn't feel right. No first-year should possess that level of combat instinct. Not unless he's been through… something far worse than we can imagine."

Mina's uneasy expression deepened. "You think… he's hiding something?"

Tsuyu didn't answer immediately, her gaze drifting, almost drawn, toward the empty seat where Midoriya would soon sit. "I think… he's seen things. Done things. Things the rest of us can't even comprehend."

Ochako overheard, a cold knot tightening in her stomach. She bit her lip hard, her gaze dropping to her desk as if seeking refuge.

When the door finally slid open, the sudden, almost violent silence that fell over the room was absolute. Every head snapped toward the entrance. Whispers died, choked mid-sentence. Izuku walked in, his expression calm, almost unnervingly indifferent, as he moved to his desk and sat down. He seemed utterly oblivious to the collective, stunned gaze of his classmates.

The others exchanged wide-eyed glances, a silent, desperate plea for understanding passing between them. No one dared to speak. The silence was not just heavy; it was suffocating, thick with unspoken questions and a dawning, terrifying realization they couldn't yet articulate.

Izuku didn't look at anyone. His gaze remained fixed on his desk as he calmly opened his notebook, pen poised, as if the horrors of yesterday were merely a forgotten dream.

The tension lingered, a raw, exposed nerve in the heart of the classroom, unspoken but undeniably palpable, as the first bell finally rang, a jarring intrusion into their shared unease.

The staff room was quiet in the late afternoon, the hum of the ceiling fan and the faint rustle of papers the only sounds. Sunlight filtered through the blinds, striping the table where Toshinori Yagi sat, his broad frame leaning forward, hands clasped tightly.

The door slid open. Izuku stepped inside, moving with the same composed precision he'd carried since the USJ incident. His face was calm, but Toshinori didn't miss the faint tension in his shoulders or the subtle tightness in his jaw.

"You wanted to see me, All Might?" Izuku's voice was polite, even, but it held that same unnerving detachment that had unsettled so many since the USJ.

"Sit, Midoriya-kun," Toshinori said, his tone stripped of its usual booming warmth. It was heavy, serious, the voice of a man who'd seen too much to pretend everything was fine.

Izuku obeyed, taking the seat across from him. Toshinori studied him in silence for a long moment—the fresh bandages on his hands, the stiffness in his movements, and, most of all, that eerie calm. It wasn't peace; it was control.

Finally, Toshinori spoke. "I've read the reports. I spoke with Aizawa. They all say the same thing: you fought alongside him and Thirteen. You held off the Nomu."

Izuku didn't flinch. "I did what I had to do." His tone was quiet, flat, as if it were a simple fact, not an extraordinary feat.

Toshinori frowned, leaning forward. "That's the same answer you gave Bakugo, isn't it?"

Izuku's gaze flickered for a fraction of a second, then steadied. He said nothing.

"Midoriya-kun," Toshinori pressed, his voice low now, laced with a concern he could no longer hide, "that Nomu wasn't just a villain. It was engineered to kill me at my full power. Even seasoned pros would have struggled to hold it off. And yet you…" His voice tightened, his bright blue eyes narrowing as if trying to solve a puzzle. "…you fought it like someone who's done this before. Every move was precise. Controlled. That's not normal training."

Izuku's jaw shifted almost imperceptibly, but his voice stayed level. "It wasn't training. Not the way you think."

Toshinori's brows drew together. "Then what was it?"

Izuku's eyes lowered briefly, his voice quiet, detached. "It's just… what I am. An Agito. My body doesn't wait for me to think. It adapts. Learns. Every strike, every movement—it's like I already know what to do the moment it happens."

Toshinori leaned back slightly, his face hardening. "You're saying it's instinct. Pure combat instinct."

Izuku nodded once. "Instinct, but more than that. The longer I fight, the faster I learn. If I had fought the Nomu longer…" His voice didn't change, but there was weight in the pause. "…I think I could have beaten it."

For a moment, Toshinori didn't speak. His expression shifted—not anger, not disapproval, but something far rarer on his face. Fear.

"That Nomu was engineered to kill me," he said slowly, almost to himself. "And you're telling me… you could have adapted to it."

"Yes," Izuku said simply. No pride. No doubt. Just truth.

Toshinori stared at him, his hands clasping tighter, the knuckles whitening. This wasn't the boast of a cocky student; it was the calm certainty of something other.

He let out a slow breath. "That kind of power… it's going to make you a target, Midoriya-kun. Whether you want it or not."

Izuku met his gaze steadily, his voice soft but firm. "I know. That's why I held back. If I had pushed further, if I had tried to finish it…" His green eyes sharpened, and for just a second, there was a cold glint that didn't belong on a boy his age. "…All For One would already know exactly what I am."

The silence that followed was heavy, almost suffocating.

Toshinori finally leaned back, his voice quieter, almost paternal now. "You're still just a boy. But you're walking into a world where even pros hesitate. And there may come a day when even U.A. won't be able to hide what you are."

Izuku didn't argue. He simply inclined his head slightly, accepting the truth.

The moment hung between them, thick with unspoken fears—until the staff room door slid open with a soft whoosh.

Kagutsuchi stepped inside, mop slung casually over one shoulder, his janitor's uniform as dissonant as ever. His golden eyes swept over the room, instantly catching the tension. A slow, mocking smile curved his lips.

"Well, well," he drawled, his tone light, almost amused. "What a serious little meeting this is. Talking about the boy behind my back, Toshinori? I'd almost be offended."

Toshinori stiffened, his shoulders squaring. His jaw twitched as he met Kagutsuchi's gaze with a flat glare.

Kagutsuchi strolled in, unconcerned, his smile widening. "Oh, relax. I'm just making conversation. Or maybe we should be talking about Mirai instead? He's still waiting, you know. Getting rather impatient. Must be frustrating, all that anticipation for a proper successor."

Toshinori's jaw clenched tighter, his eyes flashing with irritation. "My decisions regarding One For All are my own, Kagutsuchi."

Kagutsuchi tilted his head, feigning innocence. "Of course, of course. But things are getting complicated, aren't they? Mirio's a safe bet. Predictable. This one…" His gaze slid to Izuku, sharp and predatory. "…evolves too quickly for anyone's comfort. Makes you wonder how long before he outgrows even your expectations."

Izuku stayed still, meeting Kagutsuchi's golden eyes without flinching, though his heart thudded harder in his chest. He felt the weight of that look, like Kagutsuchi was assessing him, dissecting him.

Toshinori, noticing the intensity, shifted subtly, his broad frame leaning forward as if to put himself between the two. "That's enough."

But Kagutsuchi just smiled wider, as if Toshinori's protectiveness amused him.

"Relax, Toshinori," he said smoothly. "I'm only pointing out the obvious. Rapid evolution's a coin toss, after all. Heroes… or monsters. Let's hope the boy lands on the right side." His words were casual, but there was a deliberate, quiet threat in them.

Toshinori's hands tightened on the table, but he didn't rise.

Kagutsuchi turned to leave, pausing at the doorway. He glanced back, his smile softening into something colder.

"Enjoy the calm while you can. Word travels fast in certain circles. And with every fight, every instinct he sharpens…" His eyes lingered on Izuku for a beat too long. "…others will start to take notice. Some won't be as patient as I am."

Then he left, the door sliding shut behind him.

The silence he left behind was heavier than before. Toshinori exhaled slowly, leaning back in his chair, his expression grim. Izuku sat perfectly still, outwardly calm, but his fingers curled slightly against his knees, betraying the rapid calculations running through his mind.

The quiet hallway of U.A. was bathed in fading orange light, the last streaks of sunset stretching across the polished floors. Kagutsuchi leaned against a window frame, the janitor's uniform he wore only adding to the absurdity of his poised, predatory air. His mop rested nearby, an innocent prop in a conversation that was anything but.

"Yes, yes, Mirai, I'm quite sure," Kagutsuchi drawled, his voice smooth and mocking, his lips curling into a faint smirk. "The little green sprout outdid himself at the USJ. Held off All For One's pet Nomu, you know. Quite the feat for a first-year. Faster than I expected, actually."

A sharp sigh crackled through the phone. "Kagutsuchi, drop the theatrics. Has Toshinori come to his senses? Or is he still being reckless about this?" Mirai's voice was tight, carefully controlled, but the strain underneath was obvious.

Kagutsuchi chuckled lowly, savoring the irritation in Mirai's tone. "Oh, Toshinori's thinking about it, constantly. You can practically hear the gears grinding in that stubborn head of his. But no—he hasn't changed his mind. Still clinging to his chosen one. Even after today's little display."

"This isn't a game!" Mirai snapped, his composure cracking for just a moment. "The future of One For All—the future of society—rests on this decision! Toshinori is gambling with everything!"

"Reckless?" Kagutsuchi tilted his head, his golden eyes glinting as he stared out at the darkening sky. "Or maybe… evolving. The boy's potential is explosive, Mirai. Adaptation like his doesn't come twice in a lifetime. Mirio, on the other hand…" He let the pause linger just long enough to sting. "So very safe. So very predictable."

Mirai's silence spoke louder than any words, the sound of teeth grinding barely hidden in his exhale. "Just tell me what Toshinori said."

Kagutsuchi's grin widened. "The same as always: his decisions are his own, and he'll choose when the time is right. The usual noble nonsense. But you know Toshinori. He's a creature of habit. And right now, his habit is…" His smirk sharpened. "…clinging to the unpredictable."

"Kagutsuchi—"

But Kagutsuchi cut him off with a soft, deliberate click, ending the call mid-word.

Sliding the phone into his pocket, he leaned back against the window, his smirk lingering as golden eyes caught the reflection of the empty hallway. The mop slipped from where it rested, clattering softly to the floor, ignored.

He wasn't thinking about Mirai anymore. His thoughts were elsewhere.

"…Explosive, indeed," he murmured to himself, almost amused, almost reverent. "Let's see how long it takes before the others notice what you're becoming, Izuku Midoriya."

His smile thinned, the amusement fading into something colder, sharper.

"Some of them won't be nearly as patient as I am."

Sir Nighteye's office was a monument to order. The ticking clock filled the silence like a metronome, keeping perfect time with his precise breathing. Papers were stacked in flawless symmetry on his mahogany desk, their edges aligned with surgical perfection.

Mirai sat rigidly, phone still in his hand, his expression carved from stone. But beneath the mask of composure, frustration simmered, building with each smug, needling word that Kagutsuchi had just dripped into his ear.

Faster than even I anticipated… explosive potential… unpredictable…

The echo of Kagutsuchi's voice lingered, like a smug phantom perched on his shoulder. Mirai's jaw tightened. Weeks of these reports—each one a reminder that Toshinori's reckless idealism was still steering One For All toward chaos. Each one a splinter under his skin.

With mechanical precision, he set the phone down, the click unnaturally loud in the quiet room. His mind churned with cold, calculated fury.

Toshinori Yagi. Once, Mirai had revered him. Once, he had believed in that larger-than-life ideal. But Toshinori had always been a creature of sentiment, too willing to place blind faith in wild cards. It had driven them apart years ago. And now, it was happening again.

But this time, it wasn't just Toshinori's career or his health at stake. It was One For All itself. The future.

And the boy—Midoriya.

Mirai's fingers curled slightly against the edge of his desk. If Kagutsuchi's reports were accurate—if the boy really could adapt, evolve, outthink a Nomu designed to kill All Might—then Toshinori's stubbornness wasn't just reckless. It was dangerous. One For All was meant to be stable. Secure. Safe. Not placed in the hands of a variable that no one, not even Toshinori, fully understood.

For the first time in years, a quiet, unwelcome thread of fear wound its way into Mirai's chest. If that power truly evolves without limit… what happens when it outgrows the boy's control?

He rose from his chair in one smooth motion, his posture perfectly straight, every movement deliberate. His decision was made.

No more games. No more waiting for Kagutsuchi's veiled provocations. He would speak to Toshinori directly. He would make him see reason.

The future was too important to leave to chance—or to a former mentor's misplaced sentiment.

Mirai reached for his coat, pausing only briefly as he glanced at the still-silent phone on his desk. Kagutsuchi's words seemed to linger in the air, that maddeningly amused tone still echoing in his mind.

"…clinging to the unpredictable."

Mirai's eyes hardened, his hand tightening around the coat.

"…I don't do unpredictable."

Then, without another word, he left, his steps echoing like a countdown.

The early morning sun, a pale, nascent gold, was just beginning to filter through the blinds of Toshinori's office at U.A., painting faint, slanted stripes across the cluttered desk. Toshinori Yagi sat hunched forward, his elbow propped on a stack of USJ incident reports, his gaze distant as he reviewed the grim details of the attack. The quiet hum of the building was the only sound, a stark contrast to the chaos of yesterday.

Then, his phone buzzed, a sudden, jarring vibration against the polished wood. Toshinori glanced down, and his eyes widened almost imperceptibly as he saw the name on the screen.

Mirai.

It had been years. Years since they'd spoken directly, years since their last, bitter argument had driven a wedge between them. A long, heavy silence stretched before he finally answered, his voice a low, cautious rumble.

"Mirai."

The voice on the other end was clipped, controlled, but beneath the familiar precision, Toshinori detected a taut thread of tension, a barely contained urgency. "We need to talk. Today."

Toshinori's gaze drifted to the reports, then to the closed door, his mind racing through the implications of such a direct, unannounced demand. He thought of Izuku, of the Agito power, of Kagutsuchi's recent, unsettling visit.

He exhaled slowly, the weight of years of unspoken history pressing down on him.

"…Alright," Toshinori replied, his voice heavy with resignation, yet firm with a decision made. "Afternoon. Staff room."

There was no goodbye, no polite closing. Just a soft click as Mirai ended the call, leaving Toshinori alone in the quiet office, the weight of years and the ominous promise of the coming conversation hanging heavy in the silence.

The afternoon sun, usually a cheerful presence, seemed to cast long, somber shadows across the U.A. staff room. The air felt thick, heavy with unspoken history and the quiet hum of the building's ventilation system. Toshinori Yagi sat at the polished conference table, his stable muscle form a picture of contained power, yet his bright blue eyes betrayed a quiet apprehension that belied his outward calm. He traced the grain of the wood with a thumb, a nervous habit he rarely indulged.

The soft slide of the door was the only warning. Mirai, Sir Nighteye, entered, his presence radiating a restrained anger that was almost palpable. He was immaculate in his usual sharp suit, every line of it precise, every movement economical. Their eyes locked across the room, a silent acknowledgment of the chasm that had grown between them over the years. No words were exchanged for several long seconds; the weight of their shared past, their bitter arguments, and their fractured friendship spoke louder than any greeting.

Mirai was the first to break the silence, his voice clipped and formal, cutting immediately to the point. "You should have passed One For All to Mirio by now."

Toshinori's jaw tightened almost imperceptibly, but his tone remained calm, resolute. "Mirai, we've discussed this. Young Midoriya is proving himself capable. He's… different."

Mirai's composure, always a brittle facade, began to crack. "Capable? Toshinori, you are letting sentiment cloud your judgment once again! Just like you always have!" His voice rose slightly, a tremor of frustration beneath the controlled anger. "Mirio is ready. He is the logical choice. He is the one who can truly bear the burden without… without breaking."

"And what makes Izuku different—his heart, his willingness to fight despite impossible odds—is exactly why All For One will never be able to predict him," Toshinori countered, his voice still low, but each word landed with the force of a physical blow. He met Mirai's furious gaze without flinching. "You speak of logic, Mirai. But some things cannot be quantified by foresight alone."

The argument escalated, old wounds reopening with each carefully chosen word. Mirai's bitterness over Toshinori's reckless idealism and near-fatal choices resurfaced, sharp and unforgiving. "Your 'hope' almost killed you, Toshinori! It cost you everything! And now you're gambling with another life, another future, on a boy who is nothing but a wildcard!"

"And your logic would have me abandon a child who needs me, who believes in something greater than himself, simply because he doesn't fit into your neat little predictions!" Toshinori's voice remained steady, but the underlying passion was undeniable. "I refuse to abandon hope in people, Mirai, even when logic says otherwise!"

Underneath Mirai's anger was clear, raw fear—fear that Toshinori's gamble, his unwavering faith in Izuku, would cost the boy his life, just as it had nearly cost Toshinori his own.

And then, a new voice, smooth and utterly out of place, cut through the tension.

Kagutsuchi. He was leaning against the doorway, a mop slung lazily over his shoulder, a cat-like smirk playing on his lips. He had been watching the entire exchange, an amused spectator tossing in occasional barbs just to twist the knife.

"You two are adorable," he remarked, his golden eyes glinting with mock sincerity. "Mirai, you should just admit it—you're scared the kid's already outpacing your golden boy." He turned his gaze to Toshinori, his smirk widening. "Careful, Yagi. Mirai's not wrong—this is a hell of a gamble. You better hope the kid doesn't fold."

Mirai stiffened, his eyes narrowing at Kagutsuchi, but he offered no retort. Toshinori merely glared, his jaw clenched, refusing to give the Lord the satisfaction of a reaction.

The scene ended unresolved. Mirai, still stiff and unconvinced, turned and walked towards the door. "You're making the same mistake all over again," he stated, his voice flat, devoid of emotion, before he slid the door shut behind him with a soft click.

Kagutsuchi watched him go, a low chuckle rumbling in his chest. He turned back to the empty doorway, muttering to himself, "Man, family reunions are the best."

Toshinori didn't respond. He simply sat back in his chair, weary but resolute, staring quietly at the closed door long after Mirai had departed, the immense weight of his choice heavy on his shoulders.

The pristine order of Sir Nighteye's office swallowed the late evening light, leaving the rhythmic ticking of the clock as the only sound. Mirai sat rigidly at his desk, fingers steepled, his sharp gaze fixed on a single file: Izuku Midoriya—the provisional U.A. profile Kagutsuchi had "accidentally" delivered weeks ago.

"You should see him yourself, Mirai," Kagutsuchi's smug voice whispered in his mind. "The boy's adapting faster than anyone expected. Even you'd be impressed. Or worried."

Mirai exhaled through his nose, the faintest crease forming between his brows. Weeks of listening to Kagutsuchi's provocations had worn on him. The Lord's reports had painted a picture that logic resisted but could no longer ignore—Midoriya holding his own against a Nomu designed to kill All Might, adapting faster than should be possible for anyone, let alone a first-year.

And Toshinori…

Mirai's jaw tightened, old frustration simmering beneath his carefully maintained mask. Toshinori's stubborn faith, his sentimental hope—it had almost killed him once, and now it threatened to gamble the future on a boy who, by all logic, might not even be able to carry the torch.

Kagutsuchi's other warning lingered like a splinter. Agitos may be immune to the Quirk Factor. If that was true, Toshinori's choice was already doomed. Izuku could never bear One For All. Toshinori wasn't just being stubborn; he was being reckless.

And yet…

Mirai's eyes dropped to the file. Something in him, something quieter and far more dangerous than anger, twisted in his chest. If even half of Kagutsuchi's words were true, then Izuku wasn't just unpredictable—he was a variable that existed outside the normal rules of the world. That thought unsettled Mirai more than he cared to admit.

For a moment, he hesitated, his hand hovering over the file. Then, with deliberate precision, he closed it. His decision was made.

He would meet Midoriya himself.

Not to argue with Toshinori. Not to indulge Kagutsuchi's games. But to confirm the truth with his own eyes. He needed to know if his Foresight—the very Quirk that had shaped his life—would even work on an Agito. Because if it didn't, if the boy truly stood beyond prediction…

Mirai rose from his chair in one fluid motion, adjusting his cuffs and straightening his tie with military precision.

"…Then Toshinori's gamble may already be lost," he murmured to himself, voice quiet but sharp as glass. "And if that's true…"

He didn't finish the thought. He didn't need to.

The file sat neatly on the desk, unopened now, but its weight lingered in the room long after Mirai left, his steps measured, his resolve set.

The late morning sun filtered weakly through the blinds of Toshinori's office, striping the cluttered desk with pale gold. The air felt heavier than usual, thick with the residue of yesterday's argument, when the shrill ring of his phone shattered the quiet.

Toshinori's stomach tightened as he glanced at the caller ID.

Mirai.

He took a steadying breath before answering, his voice low, apologetic. "About yesterday… I'm sorry, Mirai. I shouldn't have let things get so heated."

Mirai's response was immediate, clipped, professional—and cold. "The past is irrelevant. I didn't call to argue." A beat of silence, then the steel slid into his voice. "I called because I want to meet him."

Toshinori froze, his mind already knowing who. "…Midoriya-kun?"

"Yes," Mirai said, his tone unyielding. "The boy you've placed your faith in. The one Kagutsuchi keeps mentioning like some prodigy. If he's as remarkable as you claim, I want to see for myself."

Toshinori's voice faltered, trying to buy time. "Ah, well—Midoriya's busy with his training. I don't want to interrupt—"

Mirai cut him off, every word precise, final. "Spare me the excuses, Toshinori. I'll be there this afternoon. A single conversation won't derail him. Unless…" His tone sharpened just slightly, the faintest taunt creeping in. "…you're worried I won't be impressed."

Toshinori tensed, the jab landing exactly where Mirai meant it to. He opened his mouth to protest, but Mirai's voice cut clean through.

"After classes. Staff room."

The line went dead.

Toshinori stared at the silent phone, its cold weight suddenly oppressive in his hand. His heart sank, not just with dread, but with a quiet, unwelcome thought gnawing at him:

What if Mirai's right? What if I've gambled wrong?

He dragged a hand down his face, exhaling slowly.

"…This is going to be a disaster," he muttered, though the words felt less like a prediction and more like an inevitability.

The U.A. staff room was bathed in warm, striped shadows from the late afternoon sun. Toshinori sat tensely at the table, arms crossed, posture rigid—a fortress of unease.

The door slid open.

Mirai entered, immaculate as always, his presence shifting the air instantly. The room felt tighter, more calculated. Behind him, Kagutsuchi leaned lazily against the doorway, mop slung over his shoulder, smirking like a spectator at a prizefight.

Izuku sat straight-backed at the table, hands folded neatly in his lap. His calm was almost unnatural, his eyes steady and unreadable as they met Mirai's sharp gaze.

Toshinori rose briefly, forcing a strained smile. "Mirai—"

A curt nod cut him off. Mirai's attention was already locked on Izuku. The silence stretched, thick and heavy, until Mirai finally sat across from him.

"Izuku Midoriya," he said, his voice polite but clinical, every syllable measured. "Toshinori seems convinced you're something extraordinary. And Kagutsuchi won't stop singing your praises. I wanted to see for myself."

Izuku inclined his head slightly. "I understand." His tone was even, composed, the kind of calm that would have been impressive in a veteran hero, let alone a boy his age.

Mirai studied him a long moment before speaking again. "I'd like to use my Quirk on you. Foresight. If you'll allow it."

Toshinori stiffened, a soft gasp catching in his throat, but Izuku simply nodded. "If it helps you understand me better, please."

Mirai rose, every movement precise. Toshinori's heart thudded in his chest, his eyes locked on the two. Kagutsuchi leaned further against the doorframe, his grin widening.

"Oh, this is gonna be good," he murmured.

Mirai placed a hand on Izuku's shoulder, his gaze locking with the boy's. His Quirk flared—

—and nothing.

No glimpses of the future. No shifting threads of possibility. Just an empty, static void.

For the briefest instant, Mirai's composure cracked. His eyes narrowed, a flicker of something dangerously close to frustration—or fear—crossing his face. Kagutsuchi's smirk widened like a predator smelling blood.

"Well?" Toshinori asked, his voice tight.

Mirai released Izuku, stepping back. His voice was clipped, controlled, but there was a subtle edge now. "…Nothing. Kagutsuchi was right. Agitos exist outside the Quirk Factor. My Foresight can't read him."

Kagutsuchi chuckled lowly. "Told you. He's not playing by your rules, Mirai. That's why he's interesting."

Mirai ignored him, his gaze returning to Izuku, scrutinizing him now with his own judgment. The boy's calm hadn't wavered once; if anything, it was sharper.

"You're… composed for someone your age," Mirai said finally, his tone softer, almost grudging. "Toshinori wasn't exaggerating. But composure doesn't make you invincible."

"I never thought I was," Izuku replied evenly. "I just adapt to survive."

That simple statement hung in the air like a quiet challenge. Kagutsuchi grinned.

"Sounds like someone's not losing sleep over your approval, Mirai."

A muscle in Mirai's jaw twitched, but he said nothing. Adjusting his tie, he gave a curt nod. "I've seen enough for today. Thank you, Midoriya."

He turned to Toshinori, his gaze cold, a silent promise that their argument wasn't over. "We'll talk later."

As he left, Kagutsuchi pushed off the doorway, following him out with a lazy salute. "Told you you'd think about him all night." His laughter echoed down the hall.

Toshinori exhaled heavily, sinking back into his chair, dragging a hand over his face.

Izuku sat perfectly still, his calm unbroken, but his green eyes flickered briefly, thoughtful. For the first time, he seemed to wonder if being unreadable might make him dangerous in ways he hadn't considered before.

The quiet, dimly lit office was a sanctuary of perfect order, every document aligned, every clock tick precise. But to Mirai Nighteye, the rhythmic ticking felt less like comfort and more like a countdown.

He leaned back in his chair, fingers steepled, gaze locked on the pristine white file on his desk. Midoriya Izuku. A boy who had stared calmly into his eyes as his Foresight failed for the first time in years. No visions. No branching paths. Only a blank, oppressive void.

Mirai had built his life on certainty, on the clockwork precision of cause and effect. That void had gnawed at him ever since he left U.A., a gnawing that Kagutsuchi's smug voice only worsened: "Agitos… are immune to Quirks."

The thought chilled him more than he wanted to admit. If his Foresight couldn't read Midoriya, it couldn't predict him. And if it couldn't predict him… there was no way to control what he might become.

Mirai's jaw tightened. Toshinori was making a catastrophic mistake. Entrusting One For All—the lynchpin of their fragile peace—to an unpredictable anomaly was reckless sentimentality at its worst. Mirio was the logical choice, the safe choice.

And yet…

A sliver of doubt slipped in, unwelcome. Kagutsuchi's reports, irritatingly smug as they were, painted a picture of terrifying adaptability. The boy had survived a Nomu designed to kill All Might. Every second he fought, he learned. Evolved.

Mirai shook his head sharply, as if physically banishing the thought. Sentiment was a luxury he couldn't afford. Logic was the only thing that preserved the future.

He stood, the chair gliding soundlessly back, and strode to the whiteboard dominating the far wall. His meticulously drawn flowcharts—arrows converging toward a stable outcome with Mirio at its center—glared back at him. But now, there was a new line to draw.

With a firm, almost aggressive stroke, he marked a bold divergence from the established path. In clear block letters, he wrote:

MIDORIYA, IZUKU.

Beneath it, three sharp questions:

Variable? Threat? Catalyst?

He capped the marker with a click that echoed too loudly in the quiet room. His reflection in the whiteboard stared back, sharp and unyielding.

"I'll give him time," he murmured, his voice low, steel-hard. "But not forever." His gaze hardened, glasses catching the faint office light like a blade. "If Toshinori won't act when the time comes… I will."

His eyes drifted to the framed photo on his desk—Toshinori, younger, smiling like the world itself bent toward hope. For just a heartbeat, Mirai's stern mask softened. But then his resolve returned, ironclad.

The future was too important to leave to hope. If Midoriya truly was the future, Mirai would decide what kind of future he became.

The U.A. cafeteria hummed with the usual midday energy—chatter, laughter, and the clatter of trays blending with the warm aroma of curry and katsudon. But that hum shifted the moment the doors opened.

The Big Three walked in.

Mirio Togata led the way, his trademark bright smile lighting up the room, followed by Nejire Hado, practically bouncing with her usual curious energy, and Tamaki Amajiki, who looked like he'd rather sink through the floor than endure the attention. Conversations slowed, then faded into hushed whispers as eyes followed their every move.

But instead of heading for their usual table near the center of the room, Mirio's confident stride cut straight toward the corner—toward a lone first-year quietly eating his katsudon.

Izuku Midoriya didn't look up immediately, his focus on his food, movements steady, deliberate. His calm felt… different. Calculated. Almost out of place in a room full of teenage energy.

The whispers started.

"Wait—Togata-senpai's talking to him?"

"That's the kid from USJ, right?"

"The one who fought the Nomu?!"

Izuku finally looked up when Mirio stopped at his table, Nejire peeking curiously over his shoulder and Tamaki lingering awkwardly behind them, fidgeting under the weight of the cafeteria's collective stare.

"You're Izuku Midoriya, right?" Mirio asked, his smile as bright as ever but his eyes sharper than usual, measuring. "Mind if we sit with you?"

Izuku studied him for a heartbeat, his green eyes unreadable, then nodded once. "If you want to."

Mirio sat without hesitation, Nejire practically bouncing into the seat beside him. She leaned forward instantly, her wide blue eyes sparkling. "So it's true, right? You fought a Nomu at USJ? What was it like? Did you—"

"Nejire," Mirio said gently, but his tone carried a subtle warning. She blinked, then sat back sheepishly, still buzzing with barely contained curiosity.

Tamaki sank into the far edge of the bench, shoulders hunched. "Everyone's staring," he muttered under his breath, ears pink.

The cafeteria's whispers grew louder, students straining to catch any word from the corner table.

Mirio leaned forward, his usual cheer softening into something more serious. "I've been hearing a lot about you," he said, his tone calm but probing now, like every word was a test. "You held your own against a Nomu designed to fight All Might. That's… impressive for a first-year."

Izuku set his chopsticks down with a soft click, meeting Mirio's gaze steadily. "I just did what I had to do." His voice was level, almost too calm for someone his age.

Mirio's smile didn't waver, but his eyes sharpened slightly, studying him. "Most people would panic in a fight like that. You didn't."

Izuku tilted his head slightly, as if the observation didn't warrant much thought. "Panicking doesn't help you survive."

Something unreadable flickered in Mirio's eyes, but his smile widened again, almost amused. "You really are… different."

The words hung in the air, quiet but heavy, as the cafeteria collectively held its breath, watching the quiet conversation unfold.

The early evening sun cast long shadows across Sir Nighteye's immaculate office. The rhythmic ticking of the wall clock filled the silence, as precise and relentless as the man seated behind the polished desk.

A soft knock.

"Come in," Mirai called, his voice even, unreadable.

The door opened, and Mirio Togata stepped in. For once, his usual dazzling smile was absent, replaced by a thoughtful, almost grim expression. His posture was straight, his hands clasped loosely in front of him—this was not a casual visit.

Mirai's sharp gaze immediately locked onto him, adjusting his glasses slightly. "You met him."

It wasn't a question.

Mirio nodded, walking across the room and taking a seat across from his mentor. For a moment, Mirai simply studied him, waiting.

Finally, Mirio spoke, his voice quieter than usual, but steady. "Midoriya… he's not what I expected."

Mirai tilted his head slightly, his fingers steepled under his chin. "Explain."

Mirio folded his hands on the desk, brows furrowing. "He's calm. Too calm. Half the cafeteria was watching us, whispering, but it didn't bother him. He acted like… like none of it mattered. And when I talked to him about USJ…" He hesitated, searching for the right words. "He didn't talk like a student. Not even like an intern. He talked like someone who's been doing this for years. Like someone who fights because he has to, not because he's learning."

Mirai's sharp eyes narrowed, the faintest flicker of grim satisfaction crossing his features. "So Toshinori wasn't exaggerating."

Mirio shook his head. "No. If anything, Toshinori's holding back just how far along Midoriya is. The way he looks at people, the way he listens—he's always analyzing. Always ready."

He paused, then added quietly, "When I mentioned the Nomu, he didn't react like it was trauma. He didn't flinch, didn't even hesitate. He just… evaluated it, like he was studying a sparring partner. That's not normal for someone our age."

The clock ticked steadily as Mirai processed every word, his expression unreadable.

Finally, he asked, "And your impression? Can he be trusted to carry this burden?"

Mirio looked down at his hands for a brief moment before answering, his voice firm. "I don't know. He's strong. Smart. But there's something about him I can't figure out. It's like he's not… one of us. Like he's operating on a different level entirely."

Mirai's fingers tightened almost imperceptibly, but his voice stayed calm. Kagutsuchi's words whispered at the edge of his mind: Agitos don't play by the same rules as the rest of you.

Mirio finally met his mentor's gaze, his expression serious, his tone resolute. "Toshinori's right—he's special. But special doesn't always mean safe."

Silence filled the office, the only sound the precise tick of the clock.

Mirai leaned back slowly, his sharp gaze drifting briefly to the pristine whiteboard behind his desk, where a single name had been added only last night: MIDORIYA, IZUKU.

"…Noted," he said finally, his tone neutral, though his eyes glinted with something colder, more calculating.

As Mirio stood to leave, Mirai's gaze lingered on that name, his mind already moving three steps ahead.

I'll need to see him again, he thought, the steel returning to his resolve. And next time… I won't just observe. I'll test him myself.

The clock ticked on, steady and relentless, as Mirai's decision silently reshaped the future.

The sky was painted in warm amber, streaked with soft clouds as the sun drifted toward the horizon. The rooftop garden was quiet, save for the faint rustle of leaves and the distant chatter of students far below.

Izuku sat alone on a bench, sipping from a water bottle, his calm gaze wandering over the neat rows of potted plants. It was a rare, peaceful moment—one of the few times U.A. felt still.

The soft ding of the rooftop elevator broke the quiet.

The Big Three stepped out.

Mirio Togata led, his smile as bright as ever but tempered now by a hint of thoughtfulness. Nejire Hado followed close behind, her curious eyes already darting around the garden, and Tamaki Amajiki trailed, hands in his pockets, clearly wishing he could vanish into thin air.

"Hey again, Midoriya!" Mirio called cheerfully, giving a quick wave as they approached. His voice was friendly, but his eyes… focused, measuring in a way most wouldn't notice. "Hope we're not intruding."

Izuku looked up, surprised but not unsettled, and stood politely. "No, not at all." He gestured to the empty seats around the small table. "You're always welcome."

The three sat, the atmosphere far more relaxed than the crowded cafeteria yesterday. Nejire practically bounced into her chair, leaning forward immediately, her bright eyes sparkling.

"So!" she chirped, almost vibrating with excitement. "You're the mysterious first-year everyone's whispering about! Did you really hold off a Nomu?"

Izuku gave a modest, almost sheepish smile, rubbing the back of his neck. "I… did what I could. It wasn't anything that special."

"Not special?" Nejire's jaw dropped, and she laughed, smacking the table lightly. "You're way too humble!"

Tamaki, half-hunched over with his hood slightly raised, muttered quietly, "You don't need to downplay it. Most pros wouldn't have lasted as long as you did…"

Izuku blinked at him, then smiled gently. "Thank you. But… I'm still figuring things out, like everyone else."

Mirio had been quiet so far, just watching him, studying him. Finally, he leaned forward, resting his arms on the table, his usual big grin softening into something more genuine.

"To be honest," Mirio began, his voice carrying more weight than before, "part of why I came yesterday was because Mirai-sensei asked me to."

Izuku tilted his head slightly, unsurprised. "Sir Nighteye?"

Mirio nodded. "Yeah. He wanted me to get a sense of you. Said you were… different." His words were careful, testing the reaction.

Izuku didn't flinch, only nodded slightly. "That makes sense. If he's trying to understand All Might's students… I don't mind being observed."

That answer made Mirio pause. Calm. Measured. No defensiveness at all.

Tamaki shifted awkwardly, glancing between them. "You're… taking this really well. Most people would be freaked out knowing Mirai-sensei was… well, watching them."

Izuku gave a small, almost self-deprecating chuckle. "I guess I'm used to being studied by now." Then, almost shyly, he added, "But people are giving me more credit than I deserve. I'm just… doing my best to keep up."

For a moment, there was silence. Mirio studied him carefully, Mirai's words from yesterday echoing in his mind: "Special doesn't always mean safe."

But sitting here now, with Izuku looking almost embarrassed at the attention, Mirio found himself smiling—not the polite grin he wore for strangers, but something more honest.

"Well," Mirio said finally, leaning back with his usual energy returning, "All Might clearly sees something in you. And honestly? I think he's right."

Izuku's blush deepened, and he quickly looked down at his bottle, fumbling for words. "I… don't know about that. He's probably just being kind."

Nejire laughed, clapping her hands once. "Aww, he's humble, too! I really like him already!"

Even Tamaki gave a quiet nod, his shoulders loosening slightly.

The four of them sat together, the golden light of the setting sun wrapping the rooftop in a warm glow. For the first time, it wasn't about tests, Quirks, or expectations. It was just students, laughing and talking, a brief, quiet moment where the weight of the future didn't feel so heavy.

And yet, as Mirio glanced at Izuku one last time, that lingering thought wouldn't leave him:

You really are different…