MHA 53

Sparring with Yaoyorozu, I found that, for the first time, I was *losing.* I wasn’t using One-for-All, because I was sparring with her to help *her* gain experience, and with my *normal* strength I was still stronger than she was, but by a lesser margin than I thought.

The girl wasn’t exactly a twig, but in sheer muscle mass I had her beat by a *significant* margin, but she was hitting me hard enough, with the proper leverage, that I couldn’t patch my own lack of skill with brute force. However, I could also practically feel Martial Talent cribbing notes from *her* learned skills, and letting me keep up with her.

And then she’d grown a strobe light from her forehead, and nearly blinded me, tripping me with her staff and sending me sprawling.

From there, it’d been Quirks-free, except for *that* one, as she’d pulled out more gadgets then fucking *batman*, and it was only my ability to turn to lightning, my control enough to transform my shirt but *not* the sticky-cuffs I’d been slapped with, and get free.

Only to get hit with a net made of metallic threads that practically absorbed me when I shifted again, barely escaping.

Only to get a face-full of sticky-foam, which I only *partially* dodged, keeping my mouth and eyes free.

Only to slammed in the stomach by part of a quarterstaff she’d grown from her back, ripping through *her* shirt, which I countered with a kick to her ribs.

Only to have that kick slam into a metal shield she created *right* before I hit, not completely negating the blow, but absorbing most of the force.

Only retreating just to have her pop a pistol from her bare midriff, grab it before it hit the ground, and for her to fire *another* metal net at me.

I wasn’t sure if I was pissed or proud, as *this* one I didn’t dodge fast enough, which caught my legs, and the two seconds it took me to shift *all* of one leg, then the other, to extricate myself long enough for her to charge me, hands out, and douse me with even *more* capture foam, as I desperately shot forward an electric arm, trying to hit her, and which she dodged in a move that was *very* Mina-esque manner.

Covered head to toe in hardened material, I sighed. *“Fuck,*” I swore, pulling on All Might’s power, pushing it as hard as I could. It was barely more than Midoriya had shown during our first Battle Lesson, but, combined with my own physique, and using it as he did, It was enough to crack the binding covering, and start to break free.

At which point she sprayed me down again.

*“I gib!”* I spluttered as I quickly tried to spit out the foul-tasting fluid. It wouldn’t block an airway, the delay in how it set letting a person’s natural breathing open up a passage, but it was certainly uncomfortable if it set in your mouth.

Mei had done it to me enough in testing, *thank you very much.*

“Oh, my apologies!” my partner replied, as, crackling with sparks of golden lightning, I once more broke open the quickly-setting foam. The Creator splashed me with the neutralizing fluid and the rest crumbled to dust in a few seconds, and I stepped out of the sand-like pile, brushing myself off. “I thought you were still fighting!”

I winced. Being covered, she couldn’t’ve seen that I’d pulled on my strength enhancement. I’d talked to her about it, but the difference between using it and just being electrically charged was subtle to the outside observer. “Yeah, my bad. I should’ve said something,” I apologized in turn. “That was. . . something,” I remarked, shaking my head.

It’d been a couple weeks after the end of our internships, and Finals weren’t until the first week of July, so now we were hitting the home stretch of the first semester. With my American experiences, I’d expected school to end in the middle of June, but instead of having a solid two and a half months off, we’d only get a single month off in the dead of summer. While it hadn’t been announced yet, I knew that the third week was going to be the ‘voluntary’ training trip, which only those who passed the final could attend, except they *actually* could, just with extra academics at night.

Regardless, with the studying I was doing, and the studying I was making Mina do, when we weren’t ‘studying’, I was pretty sure we’d be fine, but that didn’t mean we could slack off in any way. In fact, Mina was *supposed* to be here with us, but she’d begged off at the last moment, citing a family emergency, but insisting it wasn’t anything *that* bad.

And so it was just the two of us hanging out, for the first time in. . . *ever* really.

“Seriously, good job,” I told the girl, who was leaning on her quarterstaff, tired from our spar. “I had to use my strength enhancement just to break free.”

Instead of being buoyed by my praise, though, the girl wilted. “You mean you weren’t using your full strength against me?” she asked, frowning.

“No, but if I *didn’t* have seemingly two separate and unrelated Quirks, you would’ve had me, and even then, by the time I used it, you already had me,” I argued back. “And where did you get the idea for the light? I almost lost right then and there, in a way that would’ve taken me down even if I *had* still been using the strength enhancement.”

The girl straightened a little, blushing. “Oh, that was from Armor Warrior-sensei. He was a wealth of information in how to better use my Quirk, and to integrate it into my fighting style. I, I did good?” she asked, oddly vulnerable.

“You did *great,*” I insisted, “Though you’ve kind of wrecked your shirt.”

The girl blinked, looking down, her black sports bra peeking out from the shredded remains of her shirt. “Oh, that it was! Please give me a moment!” she requested, reaching up and casually unbuttoning it and removing it in a fluid movement that was oddly unsexy and blasé, though the girl *herself* was both muscular and lithe, bringing to mind the oddly discordant image of a distracted panther.

*Yeah, okay, I can see why Mina’s attracted,* I thought, looking over her as her stomach glowed, creating another shirt on the spot and slipping it on. “So, I’m good to keep going, but you looked like you’re good for the day. Any plans?”

“Not particularly,” she replied, smoothing out her skirt. “I expected Mina to be here, but, perhaps we could continue without her? Oh! I know! We could go do Karaoke! Mina said she always has so much fun with you doing so, that I have to admit I’m quite curious!”

I froze a vision of how karaoke with Mina usually turned out, only with my pink-skinned lover replaced with the heiress in front of me. I. . . . didn’t *hate* the idea, but this was *well* into the ‘talk it over with my girlfriend first’ territory. I remembered the conversation we’d had, by the river in the woods, about opening up this thing of ours, and, given how she was literally bound to me, I didn’t have any worries in *that* respect, but. . . “How about we do that with Mina. Those kinds of group things just get *more* fun with more people, assuming you’re all friends. How ‘bout we grab some food, then decide what we want to do?”

Yaoyorozu hesitated, before her stomach growled, *loudly*, and, blushing she nodded. “That sounds like an excellent idea. Do you have any locations in mind?”

I didn’t, but we left UA together and found an Izaka place, which was kind of like Tapas, only not pretentiously expensive, which was good, as we both kind of pigged out. Somehow, Momo managed to, with refinement and poise, eat about five pounds of food on her own, almost twice as much as I had. She’d scarfed down even more than I did, and was visibly relieved when I agreed to let her pay for most of it, as we both slowed down and relaxed.

“That was delicious!” she sighed, as we sipped our drinks and relaxed. “Thank you, Denki.”

“I just suggested we get food,” I shrugged, glad I’d gotten to taste some of every dish before the majority of it disappeared into the black hole that was Momo’s stomach. With the expanded explanation of her power, working with a sort of buffer that was filled with Lipids, though nowhere near a 1-1 ratio of input and output, I was sure that it was a secret I must never share, lest the girl in front of me be incinerated by the collective female jealousy of half of Japan. “Looking forward to the end of the Semester?”

The girl opposite of me smiled brightly, “I am! I’ve learned ever so much this semester, I just hope I’m ready for the finals!”

I had to laugh as, despite having *literally graduated college*, and despite having Science Talent turning me into a *low-rent super genius* solely from working with Mei, I was *still* only number two in the mid-term rankings, my lower scores in classical literature, and Hero Art History bumping my total grade a *half* a percent below the other girl, who I’d beaten in English, Math, and Science, but by a lesser amount.

If I’d cared more, It’d’ve frustrated me, and, to be honest, I had been incredulous, but Yao-Momo had been just so damn *happy* that it’d been so close I couldn’t hold on to even the mildest of annoyance. From what I’d been able to tell, the friends she’d had when she was younger, while under the same pressure to succeed as she’d been, hadn’t been nearly as self-motivated, nor, with their positions of privledge secure, as concerned with academics as she’d been.

Mina, on the other hand, was just flabbergasted to be in the top half of the class, as that had, apparently, “Like, never happened before!”

I *had* pointed out that I was literally tutoring her in half her classes, and she’d made sure to ‘pay me handsomely for my services’, as she’d teased.

“Denki?” Momo asked, with the air of someone repeating a question.

“Sorry, what was that?” I replied.

Yaoyorozu glanced at me, thoughtful, before she asked, “How do you think you’ll do in the finals?”

“We’ll do fine, and I’ve been tutoring Mina,” I shrugged. “It’s the practical I’m concerned about. I heard from an upperclassman that it’s supposed to be robots again, but with what happened at the USJ, I think making any assumptions based on previous years is a mistake. If I had to guess, we’ll be facing off against the teachers, maybe in groups of three or four, hero team versus lone villain style,” I proposed. As much as part of me wanted to call out *exactly* what would happen, Mina and I had talked, and she’d explained, in her inimical style, how even coming *close* to calling what would happen was still damn impressive.

“Against the teachers?” Momo gasped, but from the look in her eyes, I could see she was already considering how to do *just that*. The girl wasn’t as good as Midoriya when it came to strategy, but she wasn’t a slouch either. “Do you think we’ll be allowed to pick our teams?”

I shook my head. “No. Remember All Might’s first class? Hero team-ups are often random, and, well, if Mina, you, and me were all on the same team, or with someone else as well? It’d be *way* too easy.”

The Creator blushed a little. “I think you are *far* overestimating our capabilities when compared to Pro Heroes, let alone the teaching staff of UA, Denki, but thank you anyways.”

“Eh, if we were fighting someone in the top ten, then yeah, like Hawks, or Armor Warrior, or, god forbid, *All Might,* but I could take Midnight,” I half-bragged.

“You could ‘Take her’?” Momo asked, with a slight teasing smile. “Whatever would Mina say?”

“Mina would *help,*” I laughed, not having expected the double-meaning from the normally naïve girl. “If I’m being honest, though, she’s probably the *only* one I could take. Apparently my healing helps against poison-based powers. I want to say I could take Present-Mic. I mean, what is he gonna do, scream at me? I could turn my ears to lightning and be done! But I have a feeling that they’re tougher than they seem. I mean, Thirteen got dropped in a few seconds, but that seemed more like surprise and a phenomenally bad matchup. Like, the type even All Might would say to avoid.”

The other girl nodded with a troubled expression. “Indeed. I was surprised at how badly she was hurt, and, by extension, how badly she was willing to hurt that mist Villain.”

“Cut the woman some slack,” I replied, agreeing with her statement, but disagreeing with her implication. “She had a class full of fresh-behind-the-ears hero students and was facing a villain of unknown danger who’d managed to slip through UA’s defenses *and* port in a small army of criminals. I’m not gonna criticize the woman for going all Mother Bear to try to protect us.”

“But still. To resort to deadly force so quickly. . .” the other girl trailed off.

I sighed, loudly, and she lucked up at me. “This is something I’ve talked to my parents about, and Mina, but. . .” This time it was my turn to trail off, as the phrase ‘rather be tried by twelve than carried by six’ didn’t mean the same thing given Japan’s justice system. “But I’d rather have you get in trouble for killing a Villain in self defense, one that was clearly trying to kill *you,* then ***lose*** you and get in trouble for killing the one who killed you myself. And I would,” I stated with certainty.

Yaoyorozu stared at me, shocked. “You *wouldn’t*,” she finally tried to state with as much certainty as I had, and failed.

“It might not be heroic, but. . . yeah, I *would*,” I informed her honestly, smiling slightly. “I can’t remember who said it, but Mercy is the gift of the *strong,* Momo. You fight a guy who, I don’t know, fires blast of air? Do the normal hero thing. You fight Shigaraki, who lead the USJ fight, who disintegrates *anything,* even *people,* with a touch? *Make a gun* and *shoot him* until he goes down, stays down, and *do not approach him, Momo*. When I fought that Nomu, the big guy that was supposed to kill *All Might,* with Midoriya that day? I *started* with full-on lethal, and *didn’t stop,* and not only was that *not enough,* but, *if I hadn’t*, both of us *and* Aizawa would all be *dead.*”

The Creator stared at me, not saying a word, and I winced, wondering if this was too much all at once. “Sorry,” I sighed. “It’s just. . . I worry. I. . . I have a feeling that, with what happened in Hosu with the *other* guys that looked just like the guy that almost *killed* me, that things are going to get worse before they get better.”

“I, I think I understand,” Yaoyorozu finally stated. “You’re a lot more afraid than you let on, aren’t you?”

“I think I’m not hiding it, but, I mean. . . yes?” I replied. “I’m. . . If something happened to Mina, or you. I know both of you are heroic, more than me, probably, but, Heroes *die,* and we *aren’t ready.*”

Canonically, everything had turned out fine, but, *Canonically*, Ojiro hadn’t lost a foot and dropped out. We were stronger, especially Midoriya and myself, and it might not even happen at *all* with Shigaraki out of commission, but the Nomu attack in Hosu *had still happened*.

I was brought out of my thoughts as I felt Momo take my hands in her own. Glancing up, she was looking at me with a kind, compassionate expression. It wasn’t *quite* pitying, though it was close, more sympathetic than anything else.

“Denki, you don’t need to be worried,” the girl informed me. “Yes, bad things happened, but it was so unusual because of how *rare* such things are. I looked into it, and something like the USJ hasn’t happened at UA for over *twenty years*. I won’t argue that it was a harrowing experience, but to expect it to happen again. . . I think you’re worrying over nothing.”

I stiffened, angry that she wasn’t believing me, but. . . I thought of Mina, who *had* believed me, but had required some *serious* proof. Trying to look at it from her point of view. . . I could understand where she was coming from. Heroes, as a whole, had worked hard to seem on top of things. In fact, were it not for All-for-One managing things from the shadows, the League probably couldn’t’ve had pulled off their first attack, let alone what had happened at the summer camp, might *still* happen at the summer camp.

I forced myself to relax. “I, how about this,” I proposed. “We train, and we have a lethal ace in the hole, *just in case.* I’m not saying use it, but. . .” I pulled my left hand back, making the devil-horns gesture I’d trained, and let a single arc of lightning run up them like an organic Jacob’s Ladder. “But it’s better to have it, and *never* use it, instead of need it, and not have it. I *know* you, it’d take you an afternoon, but extend your toolbox that much for me. A pistol, some plastic explosives, that’s all. Nothing extreme, just *options,* in case it happens again.”

Momo laughed a little, shaking her head, gripping my right hand. “I *already* know how to make those things, Denki. But tell me you’ll stop worrying, please. It’s not good for you.”

That got a laugh out of me as well. “Mina will tell you I *never* stop worrying, but, hearing you’ve done so. It helps. Did you have them, when the USJ happened?” She shook her head. “Then I didn’t need to worry about *you,*” I informed her, squeezing her hand back. “Which *does* help. Honestly, it does. So, um, sorry to kill the mood. Got anything more positive?”

Yaoyorozu squeezed my hand once more, shaking her head, before pulling it back. “Don’t worry about it. And I do! Tell me, have you heard of I Island? They’re having an expo the week after our finals, and my parents were offered two tickets. They can’t go, but I know you have an interest in such things, and I thought you might enjoy it. *Denki?*” she asked, as I froze. “Is something wrong?”

“No,” I half-lied. I didn’t *know* something was wrong, after all. “I’m actually already going with Mei. They invited us both for our performance at the Sports Festival. But that’s great,” I insisted, as the girl looked disappointed. “You could bring Mina instead, and all of us could spend time there! It’ll make for a nice vacation after the stress of Finals,” I insisted, as Yaoyorozu perked back up.

“The. . . *four* of us,” she said, as if testing out the phrase, before she slowly nodded. “Yes, that sounds lovely, Denki! And, if you wouldn’t mind, could we perhaps go to the movies after we’re done here?” she asked, motioning towards our table. “There’s a period drama I’m interested in, but, well, you know how Mina is.”

“If it isn’t horror, action, or eye-candy, she doesn’t care,” I agreed. “Dramas aren’t really my thing, but, sure, why not?” I offered with a shrug. “Maybe I just haven’t seen the right one, and besides, with the right company, even things I normally find boring might be enjoyable.”

While not the same as Mina’s kilowatt grin, Momo’s pleased smile was just as expressive, and just as warm.