**MHA 58**

The monitoring room broke out into cheers at Asui & Uraraka’s victory, Ectoplasm giving the anti-gravity girl a grudging nod the three all leaving to head back to the main building. Unable to help myself, I leaned over, and quietly commented to Deku, “Your girlfriend’s really something, isn’t she?”

The boy instantly blushed so hard he almost glowed, waving his hands in my direction as he stuttered “G-G-Girlfriend? She’s not my girlfriend, not that there’s anything wrong with her, she’s kinda amazing actually, and I’m not, and I’m sure she doesn’t even *think* of me that way, and-”

Smiling a clapped a hand on the boy’s back. “Midoriya, calm down, I’m teasin’ ya,” I smiled, and the boy blinked owlishly. *Right, he’s used to Bakugo,* I thought. “Though, and I might be wrong here,” I shrugged, “I’d disagree with you on the not thinking of you that way.” I was. . . *not* the most socially adept, I’d easily admit, but the experience of two lifetimes, even if the first seemed ever more distant, let me pick up the fairly unsubtle indicators of interest both girls were dropping regularly.

The boy stared at me in disbelief, letting out a hesitant, “*Really?*” I nodded, and he started to smile, before he froze. “Um, we’re talking about Ochaco, right?” he whispered, the room quieting down as the next students got into position.

I just smirked. “Both.”

And, once more, the panicked expression was back. “*Both?”* the boy croaked.

My smirk widened into a grin. “***Both.*** Have fun with that, and remember that whoever your in gets *just* as much of a say in your relationship with them as you do. All three of you are tough, and doing things to try and ‘protect’ them, while nice, disrespects that.”

“*Indeed,*” Recovery Girl noted, and I winced, as I apparently *hadn’t* been as subtle as I thought. *Aren’t old people supposed to lose their hearing as they age?* “Ms. Ashido teach you that?”

“Ashido?” Izuku echoed, looking to me. “You’re. . .”

I just shrugged, as my girlfriend got into position, along with Tokoyami. “She’s something special,” I stated, not exactly confirming it. “Let’s see how she does.”

The pair in question were standing by, glancing about, waiting. “So, the Principal’s, like, *tiny*,” Mina said, looking around. “Is he just hiding? Do we need to hunt him down, ‘cause that doesn’t feel right.”

“The pursuing of those who fear justice, hiding in the shadows, is often a hero’s duty,” Tokoyami noted, his body hid under his full-body cloak, looking around. “But with how large the battlefield is, this will be quite a difficult task.”

“But, if he hides, why don’t we just jet?” she asked, motioning in the direction of the escape gate. “So we can ‘get someone whose Quirk is better for searching’ or stuff?”

The buzzer wrang, and both students looked to each other, nodded, and took off. Tokoyami ran, while Mina glided alongside, moving *far* slower than she good, but making sure to keep pace with her partner. The sounds of distant destruction could be heard by the cameras keeping track of the pair.

Suddenly, without warning, the building to their side seemed to explode, the falling collapsing towards them as Mina threw out an arm, grabbed Tokoyami, and blasted forward, barely clearing the falling structure as it collapsed into rubble behind them.

“What was that?” the bird man demanded, looking back to the wreckage. “Did the principal cause such wanton destruction?”

“Looks like it,” Mina replied, glancing around, “But how?”

On the screen, a second window opened up, showing the principal manning the controls of a wrecking crane with one paw, holding a cup of tea in the other. “Planning and physics!” the chimera noted, moving the crane, “I can cause chain reactions depending on what I destroy.” The wrecking ball slamming into a building, which started to collapse, before exploding to the side, which destroyed another building, which destroyed another building, and so on. “Such calculations are as easy for me to make as a simple cup of tea.”

Both students looked up at the sounds of building collapsing, before taking off running, trying to outrun the next collapse, but this time it happened ahead of them, cutting them off and forcing them to turn and run down an alley, the principal starting *another* chain reaction, getting to them just as they were about to start heading south towards the exit again. With no options other than backtracking the way they came, the two of them were forced north, trying to find a way out, Nezu chuckling as he started *another* chain reaction.

“Oh, they’re certainly trying, but a genius villain can always win from afar!” The chimera announced, laughing maniacally.

The others in the room were visibly disturbed by the pronouncement, but Recovery Girl just smiled indulgently. “In the past, humans conducted *horrible* experiments on Nezu,” she explained. “So, in times like this, he gets his vengeance.”

It soon became abundantly clear that the mammalian chimera was leading them around the area, like rats in a maze. “They’re not going to make it,” I commented, looking at the timer counting down, half their time gone, and with them having made *no* forward progress in the last ten minutes. More than that, Nezu was running them ragged, collapsing building to collapse *on* them if they stopped and tried to rest, or slowed down on them. They were both fast enough to get out of the way, but it *was* visibly tiring out Tokoyami.

I wasn’t sure if it was Body Talent, or the training I’d done with her, but Mina was still fine, though was shooting her partner increasingly worried looks as he wheezed, trying to keep up even a jogging pace.

Then, for a moment, the destruction stopped, causing both students to look around fearfully. “You should leave me behind,” Tokoyami announced, causing his partner to glance his way skeptically. “It is obvious that you are faster, and my presence will only lead you to a dark and terrible end.”

“Don’t be like that!” Mina shot back, but frowned, “I am faster, but, but that’s not right!”

The bird-headed boy sighed, “But such is the way of life. I am sure, had you been paired with Yaoyorozu, like you did in the sports festival, you would have already won. My failure need not harm you as well.”

“What’d I say about talkin’ like that!” the acid-user commanded, hands on her hips, before she froze, eyes widening. “Wait. . . [*the Sports Festival*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUschYZSO7I&ab_channel=AnimeOTR)*!*”

“What about it? I was not even able to progress to the third round, while you-”

“Oh shut up!” Mina snapped, annoyed. “No, we shouldn’t be like me and Yaomomo, we should be like Sparky and *Mei!*”

Asui, who had returned with Ochaco while we’d been watching, let out a questioning, “What?” as she stood beside Midoriya, who frowned, before realization literally dawned.

“That could work!” the boy smiled, “It’d be situation dependent, but. . . it could work!”

Even Nezu, who obviously was listening in, cocked his head in interest, as my girlfriend turned around, and crouching slightly, offering her back to her partner. “Hop on, Tokoyami! Time to ride the Mina express out of here!”

“A-are you sure?” the boy asked, hesitating, but the sounds of Nezu starting another chain reaction spurred him into action, jumping onto her back as she took off at speed, jetting down the only path they had, as the wreckage next to where they’d been standing was hit by another falling building, forcing the wreckage to be pushed out, collapsing on where they’d just been standing.

“Yes!” Nezu crowed, the tea put down, now furiously working both levers of his crane, setting off multiple chains of destruction. “There’s still a way out students. Come on, *use your heads!*” he commanded, voice becoming manic. “*Think Carefully!* ***Rack those hero brains!****”*

Mina was *flying* down the open paths, falling buildings coming down all around all around her as Tokoyami held on for dear life, finally outpacing the falling buildings to turn south, once more making progress for the exit, getting ever closer, but, on a third window, we could see the arching paths of destruction that were reaching out for her like grasping arms.

Sure enough, they reached her, cutting her off from the front, collapsing without even a hope of running through in time, another set of collapsing structures falling behind her, trapping her.

Without missing a beat, though, she turned and headed for a multi-story factory building, commenting over her shoulder, “Dark Shadow works best in the darkness, right?” The bird-headed boy nodded, and Mina grinned. “Then you’ll carry me through this bit, partner. It’s time to go high!”

Throwing an arm forward, Mina shot a concentrated blast of acid, wincing slightly, the high-pressure substance melting through the reinforced concrete in seconds, leaving a shadowed whole she leapt through, dissipearing out of sight of the cameras.

Before she’d even let loose the corrosive substance, though, Nezu had already started another chain reaction, the area around him starting to look a little sparse on things left to destroy, this one making a bee-line to collapse the building both students had just entered.

We all waited with baited breath for several seconds, watching the coming ruination, and, moments before the factory building was hit, two thin streams shot through a wall near the top, *almost* making a complete hole, only the very top and bottom portions still intact. Two sets of shadowy purple talons, each as large as a person, pierced the cut sections, gripping tightly to the surround wall, which cracked from the pressure they were being put under.

With a sharp *crack*, the hole of concrete was punched out, Mina seemingly attached to the inside of it, as if she’d hit it with a flying kick. The girl grit her teeth, as an *enormous* Dark Shadow, pushed her out, throwing her towards the goal, before instantly shrinking and pulling itself back under Tokoyami’s cloak.

The pair flew through the air, and, as they started to decend, flipped the disk of concrete over, Mina tensing, acid flowing out of her boots, before she shot herself forward once more, using the disk as a launching platform to gain even more distance, closing in on the gate.

Nezu, meanwhile had not been laughing, laughing uproariously as his paws were a blur, laying waste to everything around him and setting off dozens of chain-reactions that streaked towards the pair, trying to collapse the building where they’d land, trapping them right before they could escape.

“*Now!”* Mina shouted, pointing her hands upwards and shooting acid above them, concentrating as it expanded outwards into a shield.

*But what is she shielding herself from,* I thought, even as Midoriya gasped, “That’s *Brilliant!”*

As Dark Shadow pulled himself out from Tokoyami’s cloak, it became clear that what Mina was shielding herself from was the *sun*. It was nothing close to what had thrown the pair out of the building, but the corrosive umbrella Mina struggled to maintain was more than enough for Dark Shadow to manifest enough to latch onto her and drag her forward, and, in doing so, carry Tokoyami as well.

It wasn’t enough to fly, but it did smooth out their trajectory even more, the principal desperately trying to hit something else with his crane, but there was nothing left to destroy. Paradoxically, he seemed *ecstatic*, yelling, *“That’s how you do it!”* as the pair hit the ground a dozen feet from the gate, Mina blasting through it on a wave of acid, winning their fight with less than a minute to spare, and the monitoring room burst out into a cacophony of cheers.

<MHA>

Ten minutes later, Jiro and Kouda were in position, in the middle of the forest, facing off against Present Mic. “Oh, damn, I see what he did,” I commented, seeing aspects of the fight that I’d overlooked before. “This *really* isn’t fair to Jiro.”

“What do you mean?” Asui questioned, a finger to her chin.

Frowning, I explained, “Present Mic is kind of a one-trick pony. It’s a good trick, don’t get me wrong, but he has blowback-less sonic attacks. That makes him a wide-angle turret, and good suppression, but means he can’t pull a Banshee.”

“A what?” Minetta asked.

Cero, however, nodded. “Yeah, he can’t.” The others turned to look at him. “He was an X-Men,” the human tape dispenser explained.

Deku frowned, “I haven’t heard of that hero team. Are they American?”

I laughed, surprised. “That’s because they’re not real.” I knew Midoriya was a *giant* cape-geek, but for some reason I’d thought that’d extended out into *fictional* heroes as well.

It was one of the things that I’d noticed that turn-of-the-century media was still surprisingly popular. Hell, my girlfriend wanted to name herself after the villain from a movie from the nineteen *eighties*, which, considering that *I* had been born a few years later, was. . . *odd*. To me, the eighties were the distant past, the nineties little better, and I only was cognizant of what was going on in the 2000’s, but to everyone else, the difference between those three was the difference the *1880’s* had to 1890’s and 1900’s to me.

Well, not *quite* the same, as the wealth of recorded fiction helped delineate the societal trends far better than the late 1800’s, but the turn of the century, from 1900’s to 2000’s, was shortly before the *dark century*, where society collapsed and people focused more on surviving then they did creating media. Even now, some of the things being made didn’t quite measure up, so a large portion of the population focused more on things that were more popular back when *I* was a kid, close to two hundred years ago.

However, in retrospect, *every* comparison I’d heard Midoriya make was to *real* heroes, past and present, with nary a mention of the heroes *I’d* grown up reading about. Looking to the tape-hero, I lifted my hand, pulling my middle and ring fingers in to make the iconic gesture and asked, “Spider-man?”

“Spider-man,” he nodded with a grin, turning to look to Midoriya. “Banshee had a sonic scream, but he could focus it. Using that, he could push himself back. That, and with a wing-suit, let him fly.”

“But without any kickback, all Present Mic can do is blast away,” I added, the buzzer ringing and the match starting. This time, instead of set cameras, a drone followed them from above as they ran through the forest.

The pro-hero in question let out an empowered, “***YEEEEEEEEEAAAAAAAAHHHHHH!!!****”*

“Like that,” I sighed. “Jiro’s a scouting specialist, and has *some* strength, but her power is either close range destruction by plugging something in and shattering it with the right resonance, or her sound blast. Present Mic’s range is *insane* if he doesn’t have to worry about civilians, and he could overpower her even with his speakers only at half power.”

“Then, how is she supposed to win?” Ochaco asked, frowning. “That doesn’t seem fair.”

“It isn’t,” Asui noted flatly.

Izuku, however, considered that. “Mr. Aizawa set this up, so we’d learn something. For Kirishima and Sato, it was not to rely on their Quirk to carry them. The same lesson he probably has for you, Kaminari,” he stated, looking to me, and I nodded in agreement. “For Ochaku and Asu-*Tsu,*” he corrected, the frog girl smiling slightly, “it was to fight even when you couldn’t move as much. Or when you’re fighting a lot at once. For Tokoyami and Ashido, it was to work together, no, she she already knew that. Hmmm. . . Tokyami. . . he likes to use his Quirk to attack his enemies, so he had an enemy he couldn’t fight, and Ashido likes to burn through things, so she was in a situation where she didn’t have enough time to burn through *everything* in her way.”

“Very good,” Recovery Girl noted, before scowling and sighing as Jiro took her hands away from her ears, her gloved palms darkened with blood. “Oh, and I was so hoping I wouldn’t be needed for this one.”

Even with the benefit of hindsight, and *knowing* how these things would turn out, I was only starting to get this, so couldn’t help myself as I asked, “And this one?”

“It isn’t fair, you’re right Tsu,” Midoriya declared. “But it doesn’t have to be. For Jiro, it’s to not rely on blasting things to win. Her sonic attack is strong, but it’s not all-powerful. But, but I think this is for Koda. His Quirk is actually powerful, but he rarely uses it.” The boy in question recoiled from the insect Jiro offered, and Izuku nodded, “Didn’t know that. But, if he’s not using his power because he’s scared, he has to get over it to win.”

“Which means Jiro passing or failing depends on whether or not *Koda* can get his shit together,” I stated, crossing my arms. The part of me that wanted to be a teacher rankled at that kind of unfairness in an exam, but, given that the ‘punishment’ was just night classes at the summer camp, not a denial of training, it wasn’t *that bad,* but I still didn’t like the deception.

Uraraka winced, “Yeah, that sounds like something Mr. Aizawa would do.”

Watching, I could tell Jiro was in pain, but she was being a trooper about it at least, keeping a positive front as she tried to convince her partner to overcome his fears and *actually help*. Thankfully, after a few moments he lunged forward, almost putting his face into the mass of insects Jiro had uncovered when she’d broken a small boulder, and started giving them orders.

Within moments, they’d disappeared, digging, and Jiro broke a few more rocks, Koda, with only momentary hesitation, commanding them as well. Another blast of noise came from Present Mic and, when Jiro tried to run forward, she almost fell over, her eardrums perforated and her equilibrium completey destroyed.

To Koda’s credit, he didn’t hesitate to pick her up, carrying her at first to the side, to get out of the brunt of Present Mic’s blasts, and then ran right for the goal, having given the insects time enough to start to converge.

Sure enough, as he approached the ground around Present Mic’s feat cracked, before a *horde* of insects surged up the blond man’s legs covering his body as the announcer had a panic attack and fainted dead away.

“Oh, *gross*,” Uraraka squealed in disgust.

“Wow, Koda,” Midoriya whispered, “Harsh move.”

Looking around, most of those present looked disturbed by the attack, while Recovery Girl just looked *pissed*. “He let a few *bugs* beat him?” she demanded, and from a more practical perspective, I could understand. All the man needed to do was shout *downwards,* and, while he might bruise himself a little, he would’ve been fine, instead of freaking the hell out. On the other hand, *without* the man’s apparent insect-phobia, it would’ve been a complete shut out, the powers just that bad a mismatch given the objective.

*“Team Koda and Jiro have passed the exam!”* the announcer intoned, a buzzer ringing, and it was onto the next team.

The camera changed to show Momo, Ida, and Yuga all starting, not in a rocky area that I vaguely remembered, but a tightly packed street, almost to the point of being a ghetto. An overhead map showed the area to be *large*, with a several hundred-foot area of seemingly empty ground right before the gate. However, more windows opened, showing autonomous turrets panning around, several robots, like from the entrance exam, moving about, and one seemingly open street where a hidden wires could barely be seen in the mid-morning sun.

“Please note,” Principal Nezu’s voice announced, “Given that there’s three of you, we’ve given Power Loader half an hour to prepare to make things fair. Have fun!”

I blinked, “Oh *shit,*” I swore, “They are *screwed*.”

Midoriya frowned. “I’m sure Ida could-”

The buzzer frowned, and several hidden turrets popped up over the edge of the rooftops, opening fire on the three students below.

*“Oh,*” he said, as a flashbang went off, temporarily blinding the cameras, and Momo’s test started in earnest.

“Yeah,” I agreed, *“Oh.”*