

Hurt

A realistic Omegaverse

Von Gepo

Kapitel 3: Getting together

"I think you learned to pass from every available angle." Otsubo shook his head but smiled. "By now you can pass into his jump when he hasn't even lifted from the ground behind your back. That is simply amazing."

"It would be more amazing if I wasn't the only one able to do that." Takao confronted their captain. "If I got injured or sick, this team would be completely dysfunctional. Of course I am everyone's link as your point guard but you all need to train on passing between each other. I can't be the only one to pass a ball to Shin-chan."

"That is correct." His boyfriend nodded.

"And right back at you! You need to learn to pass to others and trust your teammates." Everyone drew in a sharp breath at Takao's words.

Shin-chan simply lowered his head and pouted. He was cute like that. Takao patted his head for not immediately reacting with refusal. All their teammates simply stared in a mixture of shock and astonishment.

"That is most true, Takao. Thank you for bringing that up. We will use our summer camp this year to focus on passing and teamwork. Your basics are great but as Takao mentioned he is the only one working as a team player. So some of our time will be spend on trust exercises."

"Coach?" Their captain looked at the older man with dread. "Trust exercises with Midorima? That ... really?"

"What are trust exercises?" Shin-chan asked Takao.

"Things like letting yourself fall and others catching you and stuff. Exercises where you are forced to trust in others. It doesn't hurt but it will most likely be quite disturbing for you." He laid a hand on his shoulder. "I'll be with you, don't worry."

"I think that is one of the most horrible things coach can come up with." Kimura said.

"Except for Takao, we will all be miserable."

"Ah, don't be like that. In the end it will be fun." He grinned. "We could even prepare ourselves for it. How about an evening of karaoke?"

"Karaoke?" Miyagi looked at Shin-chan in doubt. "Do you know any pop songs?"

"Kazu makes me listen to them when I am at his house." His boyfriend raised an eyebrow at Takao. "That does not mean I can sing along to them. I can only sing Enka."

"You can actually sing?" He asked in surprise.

"My family specializes in tea ceremony. I can sing Enka, do fan dances and serve tea."

"No way!" He blinked. "How come I didn't know that?"

"You never asked." Shin-chan actually smiled. "And you do not have a professional tea

set at your place."

"I direly need to buy that." Takao inclined his head to the side. "You know, I wanted the others to come to karaoke to relax a bit around you but now I am actually curious to hear you sing. Are you good?"

"I was trained in it. What do you think?" Ah, Shin-chan was showing his arrogant self again. Of course he had trained to perfection, just like with anything he did. Tea ceremony suited him, it was a precise art.

"So, who else wants to hear Shin-chan sing?" Takao turned with a grin.

"Well ... it sounds better than doing trust exercises. What do you think?" Miyagi turned to their other two starters.

"I'm in." Kimura said, the other nodded.

Wow. He hadn't expected that. They were all clapping wildly. Shin-chan wasn't only good, he was really great. If he wasn't a genius and a pro basketball player, he could be a singer without problem. It was unbelievable what the guy could do.

"And here I thought you had no emotions. Songs about loneliness are definitely your thing." Miyagi stood to shake Shin-chan's hand. "I am sorry if I ever insulted you, carelessly thinking you would not feel it anyway."

His boyfriend simply blinked in confusion.

"Thank you, Miyagi. Some of your words hurt and I am happy I could get across that I am a human being like everyone else." Takao said over Shin-chan's shoulder mimicking Shin-chan's voice.

"Oi!" The bigger one turned.

"Someone has to represent your human side, Shin-chan. It's because you never let them see you cry or hurt that they think like that." His boyfriend seemed to decide that silence was the best course of action, so Takao let him sit. "Now, who is next?"

"You are." Otsubo gave him a microphone.

"Well, I am not as good as you, Shin-chan." Takao winked at him. "But I specialize in love songs. You can learn to sing about something other than loneliness."

"I guess it is not exactly easy to feel lonely with that guy at your side." Miyagi sat next to Midorima.

"Not when we are alone at least." The bigger one studied his captain for a moment. "I still feel disconnected from everyone else. But Takao helps a lot."

"So you are interested in other people?" Miyagi looked surprised. "You never gave off that feeling."

"I never understood what was positive about talking to others when it was not about achieving some kind of goal. But Takao never stops talking and somehow I learned to like the chatter."

"So put in one, you have no clue how to talk to people?" Miyagi spoke without any accusation in his words.

"Pretty much."

"Huh ... I am beginning to see what Takao sees in you. Even though I still don't understand why he bothers with you. But I guess if it is true you really perfect everything you do, you must at least be quite skilled in bed."

"That's not what we are about." Shin-chan straightened. "Kazu has the same trust issues I do. He simply has another way to deal with them. Do you really think you know him? Then think again."

Miyagi blinked in confusion. It took a moment before he spoke again: "I instinctly wanted to disagree but you are right. He seems like an open and outgoing person but

he is close to no one but you. So I guess you know what you talk about."

"Yeah, I've never seen Takao with anyone but you. You seem to be his whole focus in life." Kimura leaned nearer. "Sometimes I asked myself if he might secretly be an Omega or something. It is unusual for a Beta to focus on a person like that."

"True ... since that day I threatened to throw him off the team and he bit my head off, he has been offensive in his affection towards you. He does not hold back at all, he simply refrains from openly kissing you. But anyone could see you are a couple." Otsubo said and seemed to collect his thoughts. "You know that gay players are not taken on as JBL players? If you stay with him, you won't have a career in basketball." "If they don't want me it's their loss. My parents want me to study medicine at Todai anyway."

That left all three with their jaw hanging open.

"Oi, Shin-chan!" Takao put down his microphone, the song had just finished anyway.

"Have you said something rude?"

"I am not aware that I did." His boyfriend answered.

"That does not mean you didn't. What has he said?" He turned to Miyagi who was normally the most coherent.

"He says he does not need to play for the JBL, he can study medicine at Todai." The blond shook his head. "Is he for real?"

"He is simply stating facts. Shin-chan finished our last exams as one of the top ten in the country." Takao sat on Shin-chan's other side. "He's a super genius and a great athlete."

"If you were an Omega or a woman I would completely understand the allure but his genes won't exactly help, you cannot get pregnant, Takao."

"Shame that." Still he only shrugged. "I like Shin-chan a lot anyway."

Miyagi couldn't seem to find anything to say to that. Kimura saved the situation by asking: "Does anyone want ice-cream? I'll get some."

"Matcha for Shin-chan and vanilla for me, please." Takao, who nearly laid in his boyfriend's lap to talk with others, looked up. "Now I know why you always get matcha. Do you even know any other flavors?"

"Why should I try? I like matcha. It is healthy."

"Kimura, if they have chocolate, bring a choco one as well. Better yet, I am coming with you. Shin-chan has to try every flavour they have."

His boyfriend only sighed deeply. Still, he would try. After all, he was a tsundere. Takao wished he could kiss him in public.

"Takao?" Shin-chan inquired on their way home. By now he spent half the week at Takao's place anyway, his mother did not worry anymore. "Why is everyone so sure that you bottom when we have sex? Is it so strange that I like it?"

"Not at all." He smiled to the taller one. "Most Alphas are simply too proud to even consider not topping for once. After all, topping is an instinct for Alphas. I guess we Betas never think about the fact that someone could want to act against their instincts until we are confronted with it."

"So you expected me to top as well? Are you dissatisfied with-"

"Please don't even finish that question, it is absurd." Takao went serious for once.

"Sex with you is the best, among other things we can do together. Really, Shin-chan, sleeping with you is the absolute bliss. I completely forget why I was ever into women."

"Really?" The other seemed surprised.

"Nothing beats your muscles, your smooth skin and those cute little noises you make right before you come. For me, you are the best ever. I hope that never has to change."

"You aren't growing bored of me? It's been two months after all. Your girlfriends never lasted more than a week."

"That should tell you that you are nothing like them." Takao stopped suddenly and took his boyfriend's hand. "I might sound very cheesy now but this is important, so listen. You are great in bed, don't worry. But more important than that is the fact that I love you. Even if you did not have this perfect body or couldn't move or I don't know what, it would still be great because it is you."

Sadly it was too dark but he was sure that Shin-chan had a slight blush on his cheeks. Hell, even Takao might be blushing, this was damn embarrassing. But with Shin-chan you simply had to be honest. He would misunderstand everything else.

"Can we continue home?" The other shyly asked.

Takao was glad they were still standing or he would have stumbled at those words. Home? Had Shin-chan really just called his flat home? His grin could not be tamed when he answered: "Yeah, let's go home."

"Shutoku team members, please gather." They followed their coach's order and came to stand in front of him. "As you know, this team is about tradition and we have been visiting the same training camp for over ten years now. This year we have been met with an obstacle though. Another group already booked the guest house. They have only smaller rooms available now, so no more than the main team and our bench will be able to go. As an apology to the rest of you, we will hold a party where all of you are invited."

"Yes, a party!" Takao grinned.

"You are too happy for this world." One or two shook their heads in humor.

"Come on, it's a high-school party. You smuggle a lot of alcohol, call a stripper or two--"

"Takao Kazunari, there are first-years ... oh well, I momentarily forgot you are one as well. Where do you come up with such ideas?" Their coach shook his head, definitely not in humor.

"The world is such a lonely place without a cute female manager ... why are we the only top high school team without any female support?"

"Well ... err." Their coach looked around as if suddenly looking for one. "Didn't we have one?"

"She graduated last year, coach." An older student said.

"Really? I must be getting old." The man sighed. "Whatever, come see me after practice for the room arrangements."

"I hope we can get a two-bedroom." He said to his boyfriend.

"We are going there for training, you pervert." Shin-chan did not sound too annoyed though.

"Oh, I am all for physical exercise." He grinned. "You are a great partner to train with after all. All those special moves they have given us..."

"Just shut up." Shin-chan still smiled faintly.

It was great meeting Kuroko and Kagami at the guest house. Takao gave them a thumbs up and a thanks, even though they did not know for what. One evening he actually had the chance to chat with Kuroko a bit while Kagami was still out running. Secretly watching their boyfriends had forged enough of a bond for him to freely talk

to the smaller boy.

So he learned that Kagami was in fact not mated to Kuroko. Though he planned on asking Kagami, he wanted to do so after he was sure he could stand the "red-haired idiot" (his own words) for a lifetime. It got Takao thinking. He was pretty sure he wanted to spend his life with Shin-chan but he had never even considered doing something about it. It was not as if they could mate. They also couldn't marry. Was there anything they could do? He would have to consider it further.

But before any of that, he would concentrate on the Winter Cup. Of course about two weeks before the event, the worst happened and Shin-chan caught a cold. The team went into a panic, showering him with fruits, medicine and well-wishes to last a lifetime for his boyfriend. So he decided to pay Shin-chan's home a visit.

Before he had always stopped in front of the gate, never entering the premises. He didn't know what he had expected. The Midorima family was into tea ceremony, so of course they would have a traditional house, maybe even a tea parlor or a restaurant. He did not expect an old samurai mansion though. Not only a mansion, it was a two yard house, more expensive than anything Takao had ever seen in Tokio except for the Emperor's palace. The place was huge! Not only did it have two inner yards, it had a front yard and a surrounding garden. It was beautiful. The flowers were still in bloom at the same time that the leaves turned yellow. A paradise of golden hues and orange filled his surroundings, stopping him in his tracks.

"May I help you, dear?" A regal woman in a kimono asked him.

"Ah, I am deeply sorry for intruding." He bowed down low. "My name is Takao Kazunari. I was sent by the Shutoku basketball team to bring their well-wishes and gifts for your son's speedy recovery." At least he hoped Shin-chan was her son and he had not unwillingly insulted a cousin of some sorts.

"That is most kind." She smiled which lit up her whole face. "Would you accompany me to the kitchen, so that we can prepare some of that delicious looking melon?"

"Of course, Madam." He stepped out of his shoes in their entryway and followed her.

"Takao-kun, you said? So you are the boy our son spends all his time with lately?"

"That is correct." What could he say? "He tutors me and we play games sometimes."

"I hope he is not intruding too much. He has good manners but sometimes he seems unable to correctly judge other people and overstays his welcome." They entered the kitchen where Shin-chan's mother bound up her kimono arms.

"Please do not worry, he is polite to a fault. He is more than welcome at my place." He tried to assure her.

"Your place?" She turned to him, a questioning look in her eyes.

"Yes, I am living by myself. My father currently works in another city and changed his living place accordingly. My mother passed away." Or something like that. She left with a lot of money, never to be seen again. She was dead to him at least.

"I am sorry, dear." She had a sympathetic smile that seemed genuine. "In that case I am happy to know my son spends you company."

"Yes, I am really thankful actually. It gets lonely in that flat without him."

"So that is why he also spends his nights. I feared he was into girls now but I did not actually believe that to be true. So I was unsure about his reasons." Her smile grew wider. "It is a relief to finally talk to you. I was so afraid Shin-chan was doing something dangerous."

"You also call him Shin-chan?" Takao smiled as well. "I started doing that to signal him he was behaving alright because he was unable to sense that himself. By now I rarely ever call him Midorima, he is a fast learner."

"I am happy to hear someone is looking after him." She took the melon and began slicing it. "He behaves perfectly as long as everyone follows the old etiquette. But as soon as someone oversteps, he becomes unable to deal with that. I fear today's high-schools are full of people who never even learned those rules."

"Yes, he was quite lost in the beginning." Shin-chan's mother seemed aware of her son's shortcomings though she had nice words for it.

"I fear we were unable to give him a good guiding example how to interact with the outside world. My life is spent in these walls and my husband holds tea ceremonies here and outside. For hundreds of years our family has followed the samurai path until we changed to tea ceremonies after the Meiji revolution. We mostly marry into or from other such families or temples. It is a reclusive life-style that might seem backwards to modern people like you." She looked at him. "For us it is keeping a tradition that is dying in modern times. We try to keep the life of our ancestors alive."

"That sounds most honorable." Wow. Shin-chan was from a really, really strict family. Suddenly his behavior seemed completely normal. "Shin-chan hasn't told me much about his family. I just learned a few weeks ago that he had learned tea ceremony and other skills at a young age. I heard him sing once, it was beautiful."

"He has a great voice, doesn't he?" Her smile was brilliant. "He is not the most social but has a reliable, giving nature. I always fear that people might exploit that but on the other hand, he is an Alpha, so I guess he can fend for himself."

"If not, I do it for him." He couldn't stop himself from uttering that. Of course she had looked up at that, who wouldn't? He must sound extremely blunt in her opinion. "I am protective exactly because he has such a beautiful soul. He learned to be arrogant and mean to keep others off but that is not him. I like it when he acts like himself and trusts me to keep others from thinking him weak because of that."

"I thought a lot about what a friend of my son might be like. I always guessed it would be someone he could open up to, someone reliable and deeply caring. I guess I was right." She put the melon on a plate. "I just did not think he would be able to find such a person so early." She turned to him. "It takes a lot of personal growth to forge such a deep bond. Most teenagers would shy from it."

"He is worth overcoming such childish fears for." If he really wanted to have a marriage like bond with Shin-chan one day, this would be the person he had to impress. In such families, women seemed devote but were the ones who influenced their husbands' decision a lot as far as he knew. This might be the deciding moment for their future. She had already told him she expected her son to marry a girl of her choosing. Now it was his turn to show her that might not be the only option. He had an inkling that in the end, Shin-chan would follow his mother's word no matter what. It seemed he was brought up like that. So his only option for keeping Shin-chan was to show his mother that he might be worth consideration.

"I'll show you to his room. He will like the company."

Takao smiled. It might take years to persuade her but he had made a step in the right direction.

"Are you sure you can play?"

"We are playing Seirin, it is not like I could sit this out." Shin-chan sighed. "I trained my endurance for months. A small cold which should be at an end anyway will not keep me from playing."

"I just worry." Takao knelt in front of his boyfriend. "I know we cannot win this without you but I rather lose this tournament than to see you harmed. You know that you can

get a heart infection from playing while you are still sick. If you feel dizzy, I want you out, do you hear me? No matter if we lose than. I rather lose a game than you."

"I will look after myself." Shin-chan promised.

Takao played with a strand of green hair in thought. Was it really alright? He knew Shin-chan was stubborn but he could persuade him if he really wanted to. Maybe he should press his point if his boyfriend looked as if he needed a break. Playing Kagami would be hell. He'd give him a nice hot bath tonight.

"I know you are in love and such but could you please be a bit less lovey-dovey? There are people without girlfriends present."

"Go out and have your pick." He gave his captain a certain look. "Easier yet, take one of the lot that is after my boyfriend. You can keep them all."

"You'll have to fend those off for the rest of your life." Kimura smiled. "At least there have been less and less the last few weeks."

"They seem to be finally getting the hint. As if the first fifty weren't a clue he might not be interested in dating." Takao rolled his eyes.

"Well, he was. Just not into girls." Miyagi shrugged. "Every girl thinks she might be special, might be the one. They are not like we guys. We are exchangeable and we know it."

"With the right person you are never exchangeable." Shin-chan said and stunned everyone with that. "Neither boy nor girl. If it is love, you will be special for the other person forever, no matter how ordinary you might be."

"Could you turn for a second and pretend you don't know I am kissing him?" Takao asked his teammates.

Miyagi sighed deeply but turned his back to them to rummage in his bag. He took that as a sign of approval, so he leaned up and pressed his lips against Shin-chan's briefly. They had never actually outed themselves but in the last few months one had to be blind not to see the obvious. They weren't exactly hiding their relationship either. So the others had more or less accepted them.

It was a great feeling to be able to freely love Shin-chan. He hoped they would never have to stop.

"I can't believe this is going to be the first match." Takao shook his head, still in shock even after they had taken their seats and saw the teams bow. "Who starts with Seirin versus Touou as the first match? Are they after the press this match generates?"

"It will certainly be a high-class match and distinguish the Winter Cup from the InterHigh. It is not a bad choice for an opener, people will want to come back after that."

"But I rooted for Kuroko. It is ... I mean, they won't beat Aomine's team, won't they?" He looked to his boyfriend.

"Touou is a team of specialists who play well together. It would give old Teiko a good match if that was possible, at least the team of second grade. Seirin has good teamwork but their individual skill is mostly good at best. Kagami and Kuroko are special, Kiyoshi and Hyuga are exceptional and Izuki is good but their opponents are all exceptional to special. With a lot of luck they may win but only if they found a way to stop Aomine. And I fear to experience what a developed Aomine looks like."

While they talked, the game had already progressed to the second quarter.

"Say, this tension ..." Shin-chan made an appreciative noise when Takao searched for words. "I don't know, doesn't Kagami look extremely on edge? Even more than the normal "I am playing a miracle" tension?"

"I don't think he has taken kindly to Aomine humiliating Kuroko. Here you see two Alphas fighting over an Omega with a basketball." Shin-chan sighed. "This will turn ugly."

"Were Aomine and Kuroko ... an item of some sort?" While Takao asked, their teammates leaned over to hear as well.

"I am sure that Kuroko was infatuated with Aomine at some point. But Aomine behaved like the ass- I mean ... he wasn't very polite."

Takao was already laughing and the others snickering at least.

"Oh, shut up." Shin-chan crossed his arms. "Aomine has a bad personality. I could give you some examples but most of them are highly private. Just believe me when I tell you that you can't imagine how bad he can get. He hurt Kuroko a lot. I was so angry once I physically attacked him. Sadly he is stronger than me."

"He made you mad enough that you ... what? Punched him?" The blackhaired smiled.

"No, I tried to snap his neck and when he dodged I got his arm and nearly broke it. I was seriously trying to kill or at least physically maim him forever." The tallest one gauged their reactions, seeing them all looking aghast. "I didn't work. He was close to breaking my throwing hand when Akashi stepped in." He held up his taped left hand.

"Since then we haven't been on good terms."

"That is the understatement of the year." Takao shook his head. "Do you think Kagami knows? Is that why he is so keen on beating Aomine?"

"If Kagami knew what Aomine did to Kuroko, they would not play basketball over it. If someone did to you what Aomine did to Kuroko, I'd kill him, stronger or not."

"Was it rape?" Miyagi whispered.

"Rape is nothing against it, believe me. And I am not belittling rape with that. It was just that horrible. As I said, you don't want to know because your minds would never come up with it anyway and it should stay like that." The other took a deep breath.

"But I think Kagami can feel that there was something very serious going on between them. It is Kuroko's wish that he beats Aomine and I am sure Kagami will surpass himself to do just that. To Kuroko, this is the most important game they will ever play. They will both give it their all because for Kuroko his sanity might be on the line."

"That serious?" Takao studied the players closer. Kuroko indeed looked extremely unhappy on the bench.

"I am not one for melodramatics." Shin-chan took his hand and interlaced their fingers.

"You know what Kuroko went through to get here. Aomine is the reason he lived through it all."

"He is unbelievably strong."

"Rather he is close to his breaking point. They either win this game or I fear we might lose the Kuroko we know over it. If they lose, he will simply give up." The taller one seemed pensive.

"I direly hope Seirin wins." He leaned nearer and whispered into his boyfriend's ear.

"Will you tell me what Aomine did?"

"No." Shin-chan squeezed his hand. "I won't burden you with that. You would never look at either of them the same."

Well ... seeing as Shin-chan had freely told him about the hunts, the gang-rape and the abortions, maybe he should simply take his word for it. It was true he could not even think up something that would be that horrible in relationship to what the other had already told him. Maybe it was best not to know.

He was sitting in Shin-chan's lap, the other's head buried in his shoulder. He pressed

his wet cheek against Shin-chan's and tried to stifle his sobs. Damn it all. Shin-chan had told them so much about Akashi but to see it all in action, used against them, it was just ... it was so horrible. They were an unstoppable might but still it hurt so much.

"I'm so mad right now." Shin-chan tightened his grip.

"You have a shoulder to cry on at least." Miyagi sighed deeply. "If I were to cry like that in front of my girlfriend, she would be deeply disturbed. Most likely she would tell me it was just a game. Women don't understand such things."

"It was just a game to you." The green haired looked up, ignoring the indignant shouts from his teammates. "I know Akashi. He did not even go all out. He used about fifty percent of his strength against us. That is what hurts most. Akashi can take on a team of miracles by himself, I know, but to be shown my place like that ... that ... I hate to be shown my shortcomings like that."

"For us you are all monsters when it comes to basketball. To know there is one among you that you regard with the same awe and fear ... we never had a chance in the first place but it still frustrates me." Takao leaned back a bit. "Akashi truly is a league of his own."

"Well, at least we made it to the semifinals and were not kicked out of preliminaries like before. That sucked more." Kimura stood. "I can accept a loss against a force like Rakuzan. Your former captain is unbelievable, Midorima."

"My parents won't accept that as a reason." There was something close to a pout on Shin-chan's lips.

"Did they come to watch?" Takao asked smiling. He remembered Shin-chan's mother, she was a nice and kind, even if strict person.

"Yeah, I saw them." The other sighed deeply. "Let's shower, wash our faces and greet them. Hopefully my father won't be too angry. I have most likely hurt his pride by losing."

"Well, he can play Rakuzan himself and look how he fares." Takao snorted. "It was a damn good match, it is not as if we went down without a fight."

"Yeah, Akashi smiled at the end. That is a sign we at least entertained him." Annoyance laced Shin-chan's voice. "I hate to be proud of that but it is something to be proud of."

"Gee, doesn't that make me feel better." The shorter one climbed off the lap. "Let's crush Kaijou tomorrow, I feel like I need a morale boost."

"Not only you." Even Shin-chan managed a grin. "And you seem astonishingly sure about Seirin winning the next game."

He only smiled to that. While they showered, Takao marveled over how expressive his boyfriend had become. He used a lot more facial expressions and gestures now. He intoned his speech, not much, but noticeable. He really did well.

They said their goodbyes to the team that went to sit together to watch the next game. Shin-chan led him to one of the higher ranks where a man and a woman sat in Kimonos at the end of a row. How his boyfriend had spotted them was beyond him but a lot of things he did were that.

"Thank you for coming." Shin-chan bowed in front of them. "I am sorry that I could not show you a better game."

"It seemed a hard one." His mother stood and took her son's hands into hers. "That captain, he was your former captain, wasn't he? The one you used to play Shogi with."

"Akashi Seijurou. Why did you not attend the same school as him? He is a valuable friend." His father simply stood, he did not even greet. That stern expression on his face did not bode well.

"In that case, we would have been unstoppable and lost our reason to strive to new heights." Shin-chan looked his father straight in the eyes. "Being the best always holds the danger of making one lazy."

"I see." The other's expression relaxed. "In that case I am glad to know you will use this as a reason to better yourself." His focus shifted. "Would you introduce us to your companion? I recognize him from the game."

"Takao Kazunari." His boyfriend introduced him while he bowed as perfectly as he could.

"You played exceptionally well together." Misses Midorima praised him. "You must have spent endless hours in training to become that accustomed to each other."

"Thank you for your kind words." He smiled at her.

"I guess you will want to stay for the next game?" Shin-chan nodded to his father.

"Then sit with us. We can go to a restaurant afterward. You might not have won but if it makes you stronger still, it was a valuable experience anyway."

"Thank you, father."

Well, that was unexpectedly nice. They exchanged a smile before they sat down, Shin-chan next to his parents with Takao in his other side.

A month went by after the Winter Cup before Takao became frustrated. There simply were no new tricks to learn. His eagle eye saw the whole field, he could pass from every point on the field in every angle, he could shoot threes – not as good as his boyfriend of course but well enough – and had even trained pace changes like Aomine did. He knew what he wanted to learn but hated that it might be impossible for him. Still, one could try, right? So he invited Kuroko and Kagami to a basketball double date.

Playing basketball might not exactly be one's dream date but for Shin-chan and him it was fine. They played the whole afternoon with Shin-chan training Kagami in long-range shooting and Kagami teaching instinctual play while Kuroko explained the basics of misdirection to Takao. He bought ice-cream for them all afterward.

"Thank you, Kuroko. I won't ever be able to do that as good as you know but I can see how incorporating a bit of this can strengthen my play."

"Somehow I am sure we will lose the next time we play you." Kagami sighed deeply. "If you really learn more formless shots, Midorima, I don't know how anyone will ever stop you except for triple-teaming."

"It will be hard for me." Shin-chan pushed up his glasses. "I rather stick to traditional techniques and perfect them. Learning unconventional plays is not my forte." Still he smiled. "Next time I won't play you when I am still sick."

"You what?" The red haired turned with a shocked expression. "You were sick? I didn't even notice."

"I had a cold two weeks before our game and were still under the weather." The other smirked. "You won't get off as easy the next time."

"Man, you are unbelievable. I can't believe how horrible it must have been for people to play Teiko. No wonder everyone seems broken when they talk about losing to you in middle school. Akashi alone was horrible enough."

"Akashi is special." Kuroko agreed. "With teamwork, we would have overtaken the JBL."

"We could still do that." The green haired smiled. "Do you want to issue a challenge to them in our name?"

"I would like to relax for a bit more first." Even Kuroko smiled, a lazy and content

expression. "Winning against you all has been my focus and reason for a long time. Now I have to sort through my priorities."

"Will you be alright?" Shin-chan turned serious in an instant.

"Thank you for asking." Kuroko's smile turned to a slightly melancholic one. "I was able to close the chapter called Aomine. I am not too sure about the other one right now. It will take more time I think."

Kagami who stood next to Kuroko looked quite confused. It seemed his most-likely-soon-to-be mate had not told him about his past. Takao felt bad for him and intrusive at the same time. Shin-chan had told him a lot of personal stuff about Kuroko.

"I would like to close my own." Shin-chan took a deep breath. "Would you help me one last time?"

"Of course." Kuroko looked up curiously. "What is it?"

"As you know I hate that I couldn't control my Alpha instincts. I have trained that as well. For months now I have not been influenced by people's scents anymore. I could even pass by Omegas without a reaction. I have not tested myself on a full blast of Omega pheromones though. Would you loosen the control on your scent for me to test myself?"

Takao sharply drew in his breath. Oh damn. This was Shin-chan's ultimate horror. If he could not stop himself he might even rape Kuroko again. He would never forgive himself. He himself certainly would not be able to stop his boyfriend, he remembered his helplessness when that Omega girl tried her pheromones on Shin-chan.

"Sure." Kuroko nodded without any hesitation. "Kagami, if Midorima attacks me, please try not to kill or maim him. You are strong enough to simply hold him until I rein in my pheromones again."

"Err ... okay?" Kagami scratched his neck. "You are an Omega?"

"You did not notice that until now?" Takao exclaimed in shock. "How oblivious can you be?"

"I never thought about it. It is not exactly important, is it? Kuroko is still Kuroko."

"Kagami is thick enough that he did not even notice his brother being an Omega. Himuro tried to distance himself from Kagami after his heats began and that one never made a connection."

"Oi, how should I notice my own brother suddenly ... well." Kagami became as red as a tomato. "I mean you don't expect your brother to develop such feelings."

"Himuro is with Mukisabara now, right?" Takao remembered the feminine looking star player of Yosen.

"Yes, after Kagami still did not notice a thing, even after meeting again, Himuro mated with our old friend." Kuroko smiled. "Mukisabara isn't exactly intelligent but he is reliable when you tell him it is important. He is certainly not the worst choice as a partner."

"I do question your taste. Though it is not as if your own choice was a fine example of brain power." Shin-chan snorted. "Why you two who could have everyone chose nothing but muscle is beyond me."

"It is about taking responsibility." Kuroko smiled slightly. "That has become more and more important the older I got."

"True." Shin-chan looked to Kagami. "In that case I understand completely."

"What are they talking about?" The redhead asked Takao. "I don't understand."

"That might be because you never put a thought into mating." Takao shook his head. Really, that was one oblivious Alpha. He had two male Omegas on a plate and didn't even notice. Good thing Kuroko did the planning for them.

Suddenly Kagami went still and growled lowly. Takao was the only one who noticed, Shin-chan was still talking with Kuroko and stood with his side to them. He tipped the taller one on his shoulder but did not get a reaction. Kagami's eyes were trained on Kuroko.

"Err, Kuroko? Kagami looks strange."

While he was still on the last word, all seemed to happen at once. With a jump even more impressive than anything before Kagami was lunging for Kuroko. Shin-chan jumped in between, stopping the bull-rush and being knocked at least two meters backwards for his effort. Kuroko turned and ran at a speed Takao had never seen before as well. His body reacted on instinct, running as well and grappling Kagami as good as he could. He only seemed a slight hindrance, Kagami sprinted after Kuroko anyway, simply dragging Takao along. They were at a park, so they had a lot of free space. Kuroko ran for the fountain, jumped in but found it turned off due to it being Winter. So he rushed for the next lake. Takao, his arms slung around Kagami's waist, held on for his dear life. If he let go, Kagami would be on Kuroko in an instant. Kuroko might want to mate with the redhead but not like that. Not with a rape. He finally understood the terror of those hunts Shin-chan had told him about.

Kuroko was the running rabbit.

Kagami was the wild cat intent on devouring his prey.

And right now he was the only one stopping that from happening. He tightened his grip as much as possible, ducked his feet into the ground and slowed Kagami down as much as he could. He would not let him hurt Kuroko. He would not let Shin-chan see what he had bad dreams about for years. He would protect his friends.

Kagami gave the scream of an enraged animal, grabbed Takao's hair, pulled his head back and went for his throat with his other hand. He saw it coming, knowing in the same moment Kagami would crush his windpipe without a second thought. In dread he let go and fell back. The hand in his hair was off in a millisecond, Kagami turned and dashed off.

"Run, Kuroko!" Takao managed to scream in absolute horror.

This could not be happening. Please don't let it happen. He saw Kagami shorten the distance in too short a time. Kuroko jumped into the lake, Kagami on him right that instant, falling into the water with him. He got up and ran after them. He saw both bodies trashing, water flying, ripped clothes floating on the surface before they sunk. "Stop, Kagami! Stop it!" He stumbled forwards, everything hurting from that short fight.

A taller stature passed by him, jumping for Kagami and pulling them both under water with the force. A shirtless Kuroko gasped for breath, using the moment of freedom to dive away from the fighting Alphas.

"Wake up, Kagami!" Shin-chan screamed at the other as soon as they broke the water's surface again. He was punched for his efforts but his opposition slowed after that.

Kagami blinked in confusion, finally stopping and helping Shin-chan up after a moment. He looked around and spotted a drenched Kuroko who looked back with only his eyes above the water's surface.

"Oh God." Kagami began to tremble. "I ... I am so sorry, I ... Kuroko."

"Your control is splendid, Midorima." The Omega stood. "Thank you for protecting me twice. Thank you as well, Takao." He actually bowed to him. "Are you hurt?"

"Just a bit bruised." He looked to his boyfriend. "Are you okay, Shin-chan?"

That one seemed annoyed at best, a bit grumpy, a bit mad at himself, but mostly okay.

He took in his surroundings and then himself. "I want dry clothes." The green haired stepped out of the water. "We will catch a cold if we stay like this."

"Quite right." Kuroko followed him, beginning to shiver before he even left the water.

"Is anyone living nearby?"

"I do." Takao nodded. "I'll run and get our bags. Shin-chan, take them straight to my flat."

"I will."

"Kagami?" Kuroko turned to the now silently crying boy still standing in the water.

"Would you please carry me? I feel cold like this and you are naturally hot-blooded."

Takao who had already turned to make a run for their bags stopped in his tracks. Kuroko was unbelievable. Did he just forgive Kagami like that? Even if he did, was he not afraid at all? Hell, he was afraid and Kagami hadn't been after him. He looked at him for a moment, seeing a lost, guilty puppy looking at them with fear of rejection in his eyes. He remembered the guilt and shame with which Shin-chan had talked about raping Kuroko. He had done so much worse than Kagami did because no one had stopped him. It should not be like that. No one should have such instincts.

"Come out, Kagami, before you get a cold." He called out to him.

"Idiots don't get colds." Kuroko deadpanned.

"True enough." Shin-chan nodded. "You'll carry Kuroko the whole way as punishment. Now come out before he loses the rest of his clothes from shivering."

Kagami jumped into action at that, enveloping Kuroko with his arms like a fragile doll and holding him up to press their upper bodies together. With a smile Takao turned and went to get their bags. Shin-chan strode forward in direction of the flat with Kagami following him, carrying Kuroko like instructed. Takao caught up with them on the stairs up to his flat. He immediately went to get big towels for Shin-chan and Kagami. Kuroko got the bathroom without anyone even saying anything. While they heard the shower running, the Alphas stepped out of their clothes except for their underwear and began drying off.

"I'll get two sets of your clothes, okay, Shin-chan?" Takao asked from the bedroom. He took out underwear as well, laying both sets on the bed. "Okay, first one can change." He stepped out while Shin-chan went in instead.

So he stood in his kitchen, dining and living room all in one with a nearly naked Kagami who only had a towel around his hips. Reality seemed to have caught up with him again, he looked down, close to tears again.

"Would you like something to drink? Coffee, tea, chocolate?"

"Kuroko likes hot chocolate." Kagami whispered.

"Then I'll make some tea and hot chocolate." Takao entered his kitchen that was open to the rest of the room. He took out a pot and began heating the milk. Should he say anything? Was there anything he could say? While the chocolate was melting in the hot milk, Kuroko called for him. He went to the bathroom from which Kuroko stuck out his head.

"Could you lend me some clothes, please?"

"Of course! Sorry, I didn't think." Takao could have hit himself.

"Do not worry. And please tell Midorima to take a shower next. He might rebel, so insist." Kuroko instructed.

"Err, okay. I will." He went into the bedroom where a fully clothed Shin-chan stood motionless in front of the mirror. "Kuroko says you are to shower next, no protest accepted."

The other stayed silent while Takao got the clothes but left the room after him. With

a motion of his hand, he indicated Kagami he should change next and went to shower after Kuroko stepped out. Takao served him hot chocolate which he was deeply thankful for, just like Kagami had thought. He concentrated on the tea when Kagami came out of the bedroom again. Somehow his mind wanted to shut out the confrontation that was to take place behind his back.

How did you overcome something like that? Sure, his boyfriend had attacked him once as well but they had known it would most likely not happen again. But to know how violently you would react if your boyfriend ever relaxed around you ... no wonder Kuroko kept such a tight leash on his emotions. He most likely needed that to keep his scent under control as well.

When he turned to serve the tea, he nearly let the tray fall in surprise. He had expected Kagami to stand somewhere in silence and guilt. He had not expected him to sit at Kuroko's feet, his head in Kuroko's lap, having his hair stroked. Really, Kuroko was amazing. He knew exactly what Kagami was going through and seemed to accept it all without a blink. There was not the slightest blame, the tiniest caution in his posture.

"Please have some tea, Kagami." He placed the tray on the table. "It is not as good as Shin-chan's but I learned a thing or two from him. Would you like another hot chocolate, Kuroko?"

"Yes, please." The other poked the head he had just petted. "Get up, Kagami."

The redhead did as he was told. It seemed guilty Alphas had a thing or two in common. Shin-chan got obedient when he was unsure too. Speaking of the devil, he came out of the bathroom and took a place as well.

"Would you like to shower too, Kagami?"

"No, I'm fine, thanks." He rather seemed to want to stay close to Kuroko. "Idiots don't catch colds after all."

"What about you, Takao?" The Omega asked him.

"What?" He blinked in confusion. "I wasn't dragged underwater."

"I wanted to ask how you were. I was quite occupied running but I understood you fought a hunting Alpha. Most people who try that end up dead or badly hurt." Kuroko gave him a once-over.

"Err, yeah. Kagami aimed for my throat, so I let go. I was too afraid of being hurt. Sorry." He looked down in shame. Really, without Shin-chan, he would have been no help at all.

"I am glad you did. You were in more danger than I ever was." Kuroko calmly stated.

"Alphas normally don't kill Omegas but interfering Betas ... well."

"Yeah." He stroked his unblemished throat. "I just got dragged around a bit, so I am okay." He sat next to his boyfriend. "What about you, Shin-chan? He knocked you down pretty hard and punched you." He gently touched the beginning swelling on the other's cheek.

"It will bruise but that is all. I am though."

"You certainly are." Kuroko focused on him. "Since when have you been unaffected by smells?"

"I am not too sure. Somewhere before the Winter Cup. Why?" The tallest drank a bit of tea, smiling at Takao for the well-made beverage.

"While I was turning to run, I noticed how you wrapped your arms around your abdomen before you landed. I know those symptoms."

"Symptoms?" Shin-chan questioned.

"Not emitting a scent, being unaffected by other scents, easily catching colds, feeling

weaker, less endurance and protecting your body like that." Kuroko watched the other for a reaction. "Maybe even a slight nausea and sometimes dizziness? I know those well."

"I couldn't be ... could I?" Shin-chan averted his gaze.

"I can't follow." Takao exclaimed. "What are you talking about?"

"Pregnancy." Kuroko answered.