

# Split soul

Von Gepo

## Kapitel 15: Difficult questions

After brunch and showing them around Natsue could barely keep her eyes open. Akashi offered to show them her room if they decided to stay the night. She just nodded along, only waking when he opened the door for her. She simply stopped after taking two steps and stared.

"Is ... everything alright?" He asked after a few seconds.

She looked around and asked: "Where is the futon?"

"It's a house with beds, honey." Ayako pointed at the bed. "That is the bed."

"We don't need to lay it out?" She asked in confusion.

"No, it's always there. Take off the house-shoes and try it."

Still staring Natsue took some steps and looked under the covers. She poked the mattress, still not trusting the thing. Finally she took off her shoes and climbed on top. "Mama! It's soft!"

Ayako laughed lowly and petted her head. "It's nice, isn't it? It's all for you."

"I can really sleep here?" She first looked at her mother, then at him for confirmation.

"I own this castle, so yes, you can sleep here." After hearing her chatter about his castle for hours, he had begun to call it a castle as well. "When you wake up, you pull this cord." He pointed at the cord next to her bed. "Then you need to wait a bit and someone will come to bring you to us. If no one comes, pull it again."

"Who will come?" She asked in awe.

"The butler or one of the maids. Or maybe one of us, it depends on who hears it first. The cord is ringing a bell downstairs, so you won't hear it, don't worry about that."

"We'll wake you for dinner if you oversleep," Ayako added. "Now get under the covers. You're nearly dropping where you stand."

"Okay." She buried herself under the blanket and sunk her head into the pillow. "It's really soft."

"I know, my dear." Ayako stroked her cheek. "Enjoy the bed and have some nice dreams." She bowed to kiss Natsue's temple. When she straightened the girl was already deeply asleep. Ayako watched her for a moment before signaling him they should leave.

After a few steps from the door she said: "Just seeing your house was a bit much."

"I gathered. I am sorry, I don't often have guests here. If I have they normally come from similar houses." He mentally thanked Momoi for her advice. "Would you like a nap as well? As you can see I have a lot of free rooms available."

She laughed and shook her head before saying: "No, thank you. I'd like a nice and quiet room to sit though, maybe some tea and a moment to recharge."

"There is a lounge overlooking the gardens right here." He opened a door to their left.

"This way we'll hear Natsue if she wakes up."

"I don't expect her to wake up anytime soon." Ayako fell into one of the cushioned chairs. "She's right, everything is very soft here."

"It was my mother's lounge. I often laid around on one of these sofas while she read me stories." He sat on one. "You have chosen her chair with uncanny ability."

"Oh." She immediately stood. "I am sorry, I'll--"

"Please sit again. It's the nicest chair around here. I have some fond memories regarding that chair." He invited her to sit with a hand gesture.

She looked at it but chose to sit in another saying: "I wanted to ask you some questions and if I upset you I don't want to spoil your memories. I can imagine you don't have many positive ones."

He kept quiet. She was right. It was one of his alter ego's memories, the only one he had of his mother except for the pictures around the house. This room was the only one he felt safe in. A lot of places around the house gave him the chills, even though he did not know why. This room was good. Maybe they should have the conversation in another room? Or maybe this was the perfect one. He nodded to her.

She opened her purse and took out a small list explaining: "I wrote them down so I wouldn't forget one. Thank you for the books. They were very helpful."

"It's helping me in the end if you were to decide to give this relationship a try." He didn't know what to do with his hands. All of his poses were made for self-assured men. He wasn't feeling sure of himself right now. He copied one of Kuroko's by pressing his hands between his thighs.

"So how long did you know that you have DID?"

"Since I went to sleep with fourteen and woke up with sixteen."

"Do you know how many personalities you have?"

"I only know of myself and one alter ego. But he says he thinks we might have more because his memories begin at five years old and mine begin at eight years old." He had tried asking his head if there was someone else but no one had answered.

"How much time of your daily life do you two have covered? Are you missing some time?" So she had read both books.

"Not anymore." He glanced at her. "When father was still alive, we were missing time. We are sure that he abused us until his death but we don't know what he did."

"You had no marks on your body?" She looked up in anguish. It seemed like both of them knew what that meant. "I am so sorry. Since when have you known?"

"I read those books with sixteen, so ... since then. I thought about confronting him or going to the police or ... but what should I have said? Dear officer, I don't remember anything but I am sure that my father is sexually abusing me? I just hoped he would die after I graduated. Whoever was responsible for that, he did exactly as I wanted him to."

"I can't really find any fault in thinking like that, even if we are talking about the death of a human. The gods know how often I wished my ex-husband would just die." She took a deep breath. "I don't have enough pity in my heart to feel for men that abuse children."

"The evening after our first date I was so glad to know that - no matter what - you would believe me. The gods know how often I thought no one ever would."

"Your friends know, don't they?" She looked at him in pity but it did not seem like she was looking down on him. Rather it felt like she knew exactly what he was going through. Hell, of course she knew. She had lost a daughter to this.

"Shintaro knows. He read the same books. It's his way of caring. I don't know about

the others but Momoi is a data gathering specialist so I expect here to have looked it up too. If the others know they never let it on."

"I can't imagine how you survived that, knowing what he did to you and still returning to this house. No matter how pretty it is, I—"

"I went to a boarding school in high-school to escape from here. Or rather my alter ego did. I could never say no to father but he was able to stand up to him. He fought for our freedom and got it. Before our father died of a stroke, he had a heart attack. At the time my alter ego was arranging a flat in Tokio. After that heart attack, we knew the end was near, so our escape plans were laid to rest." He sat a bit more comfortably. "It was only three months between the heart attack and his stroke. He was also quite weak at the time and I spent my time taking over the company."

"I see ... say, do you just say alter ego or do you have actual names? It is confusing like this."

"I guess it would be easiest to call me Seijuro and him Akashi. He is handling the business side after all. So if it would be alright for you, please call me Seijuro."

"Gladly." She smiled at him. "Do you have any idea what I should do if an unknown alter ego shows up? Is there a safe way to bring you back?"

"I never encountered the situation, so I don't know. Whoever showed up for the abuse is clearly linked to it, so I don't expect that personality to show up."

She nodded and pondered her questions for a moment. She seemed to have already asked all that she had written down. After a moment she said: "Your third personality is an unknown factor that worries me. It is someone linked to sexual abuse. Just for Natsue's safety, I don't think I want to leave you alone with her for a longer span of time. It's not that I don't trust you, I just don't trust that personality."

"Don't worry, I understand. It would make me feel safer as well. I don't ever want to hurt her." Did that mean that Ayako would stay?

"Alright." She smiled at him. "I think those were all of my questions for now."

He let go of his breath and sunk into the couch. It really was soft. He just let his mind float for a moment before he suddenly sat again and said: "Tea! I completely forgot you wanted tea."

"Do you think we could have that tea on your patio? It looks really nice outside."

"Of course." He stood and held out a hand for her. "We could open up one of the tea houses, they have a beautiful view on the lake."

"Of course you would have a lake." She rolled her eyes indulgently. "I guess we will ask your butler for the tea?"

"We are modern enough that I call him if I want something." He got out his phone and called his butler, telling him about the sleeping princess and their wish to open the rose tea pavilion. He led Ayako outside while he did so. "This will take a moment. Is there anything you'd like to see in the meantime?"

"We could take a stroll around the lake."

So they did. She asked him about some flower's names and though he wasn't aware he had ever studied them he knew their names. As his alter ego was not aware of this as well, it must have been knowledge from their third personality that was shared. Maybe their mother had taught him? She had loved flowers, it was a story his butler had told him. He didn't talk to his staff often, knowing that they most likely knew what had occurred in this house and never bothered to help. It wasn't enough to fire them all but enough to resent them.

When they reached the pavilion the doors had been opened. He invited her to sit. She complimented the beauty and simply watched the trees and the fishes in the water –

not real kois but similar looking carps. The kois were kept in a separate pool. The butler brought a tea set and asked if they would like him to perform a tea ceremony. Seijuro just shook his head and thanked him for the tea. He continued to do the tea ceremony himself.

He had learned it from Shintaro. His best friend loved everything to do with rituals, so of course he loved tea ceremony. It was one of the oldest traditions still allowed in modern times and also his family trade. His best friend was better than him at this but he was good enough to serve Ayako some matcha tea.

"Thank you." She accepted a cup from him. "It seems unthinkable what depraved humans live in this beautiful world."

"I am sure some people would count me as one of them." He made a cup for himself and cleaned his tools before taking a sip. "My alter ego did organize Omega hunts on Tetsu. When you disregard morals, it was a good idea for the situation he found himself in. He asked Tetsu for consent and used a bit of manipulation to get him to say yes. My alter ego actually thought he was behaving quite admirably, controlling those hunts enough that Tetsu did not get permanently hurt or maimed. Except for some bruises and cuts Tetsu was safe. Of course my alter ego completely disregarded what rape would do to a human soul. He just thought that with damage control and abortion, Tetsu would get out of this only slightly worse for the wear. My alter ego has next to no emotions, so he is unable to understand shame, humiliation and self-hate. He also could not fathom that one might grieve for a child they had to abort."

"But you understand it?" She did not look at him, just watched the slight ripples on the lake.

"Not in detail, no. I know those feelings, yes, not the grieve, but the rest. I just think that until I remember my own memories, I can't say I fully understand it." He hung his head. "I understand enough though to know how deeply my alter ego's actions have wronged Tetsu."

"You don't sound like you will ever be able to integrate your personalities."

"I don't think so, no. I have my alter ego's memories. I know what he did. Some days his personality is useful. But sometimes I find him repulsive. Sometimes I fear that by talking to him I'll become just as repulsive. The worst is when he shows me memories of how he abused people and they arouse me. I do know self-hate very well."

"Do you know that being aroused is a protective mechanism of the body? When you get raped it's better to be aroused because then your body takes less damage. Every situation we associate with sex will arouse us, even if we find them repulsive. It really needs a lot of disgust to kill any kind of arousal. When you see someone raping another person, you'll feel aroused, even if you know it's wrong. It's how our body works. Rather, it is a true show of character that you feel disgust, even if you are aroused."

He stared at her for a moment, dumbly asking: "Really?"

"I tried to help my daughter with therapy. It was shame and self-hate that led her to suicide. Even though I told her those words over and over again, she hated herself so much she killed herself in the end. Your DID keeps you from doing that, so I am rather thankful to your alter ego, no matter how repulsive his actions are. What's important to me is that they are in the past."

"They are." He still stared at her. "I explained to him why it was bad what he did. He understands rationally." So it was normal that he felt aroused when his alter ego showed him things he secretly found disgusting? Because when he thought of Tetsu's pain he found those memories with him disgusting. Arousing, yes, but also disgusting.

"Have my words reached you at least?" She watched him with a smile.

"My alter ego always told me I was just as depraved as him because I found the memories arousing. I also found them disgusting, he called me weak for that."

"Tell him it's just a bodily reaction. Because it is. Don't beat yourself up over it. If you ever remember your abuse, it will be arousing as well. You might even have enjoyed it. Don't worry about that. It doesn't say anything about you, even if your alter ego gets the idea of calling you a slut." She sighed. "My ex-husband called Mitsuki a slut a lot in bed. Whenever she had flashbacks she would hurt and scream at herself, degrading herself. It was a horror to watch. She cut the word slut in bold letters into her own body."

He closed his eyes and stayed silent for a moment. He could not even fathom that. It was unthinkable. If Natsue or Tsuki would ever do that to herself ... "I hope I won't ever make you go through that again."

"At least I am prepared this time." She drank a bit more tea. "Though I will think of Natsue first."

"I would not want it any other way. Children always take top priority." If he had just been a bit older, his brother and mother might have lived. If only he had been a bit older, a bit less naive, he would have seen the signs. His alter ego would have taken action. "Would you like another cup of tea?"

"Yes, please." She watched him prepare it, enjoying the view. "If I understood you correctly, your alter ego might try some of those practices that repulse you with me."

"It's highly possible, yes. I taught him to explain and ask beforehand." He presented her a fresh cup and made one for himself. "Chiho was a living example how even that can still go wrong."

"After talking with you, it's hard to switch to talking to a person that has no understanding of emotions." She blew her tea and sipped from it. "I am forewarned now."

"I don't want to lose you because of his actions."

"Does he listen to our conversations?"

"Yes." He looked at the green, creamy mix in his cup. He had always associated tea with cleaning your inner self. It's why he loved tea. "He knows everything I do. I am learning to stay awake when he is out."

"So he is learning from watching you?"

"If he wants to." He sent a mental stab to his alter ego. "Often he doesn't want to learn. He looks down on me for having emotions."

"He sounds a lot like I would imagine your father to be."

"He speaks with my father's voice," he admitted.

"So your head invented a personality in image of your abuser." She pondered that for a moment. "I guess for one he is a really good businessmen. He might also have the quest of abusing you whenever you feel a bit better, so you might not start to integrate other personality parts. If he didn't insult you, you might get strong enough to actually decide on therapy. It would completely destroy the equilibrium you are living in right now."

>She's pretty sharp. I approve of her,< his alter ego said out of the blue.

>You what?< He looked startled. >I thought you would be mortally affronted by her.<

>I don't have feelings, remember? It's hard to hurt someone's feelings if that person doesn't have them.< His alter ego leered at him, making him feel stupid again. >She might be our undoing though. If she continues like this, she might destroy the equilibrium. Our mental wounds are too fresh to heal.<

>When if not now?<

>I can't say. I just have the feeling it is not time yet.<

>I thought you have no feelings.<

>Call it a hunch then.<

"So what does he say?" She asked, obviously fully knowing they were talking at the same time.

"He says you are right. He likes you. He also thinks you are dangerous because you have a good influence on me. He says it's too early to face my memories and you are making the process go faster."

"Oh ... okay. Then I guess we should talk about something else. When did you learn tea ceremony?" She seemed content to simply drop the topic.

They began to discuss tea, Shin and samurai honor.