

Comfort

Twin-story to "Hurt"

Von Gepo

Epilog: Epilogue

"And there she is" The nurse said, transferring the bloody, screaming bundle onto his chest. "Wasn't that a great birth? Only four hours and twenty-seven minutes, that was a fast one. This isn't your first, right?"

"Second" Kagami answered for him while Kuroko still got his breath. "Our son is three years old."

"Oh, nice. So you know what you're doing by now." She cut the umbilical cord, painting even more of what they could see in red.

Kagami had averted his gaze while Kuroko stared at the squishy thing bawling in front of his face. It wasn't cute yet but he knew she only needed a good wash and a few hours to acquaint herself with the world outside the womb. It might be the blood but she seemed to have a shade of red hair. Their son had been purple which made everyone ask – jokingly of course – if Murasakibara had anything to do with their baby. It had only been fun for the first few times. But as jokes go, Himuro had born an orange-haired kid, so he had been forced to listen to the same crap. Of course Midorima had been the lucky one whose daughter looked like she actually was his kid. Not that he wasn't grateful for his children but even his new one did not seem to look anything like Kuroko at all. From the way she screamed, he expected her to turn out an Alpha just as Shiro had done. Kagami's genes were strong.

"Can you wash her, please?" He asked his mate.

"Oh, sure." That one seemed happy to be given a task and went over to draw a bath in the baby sink. It was only his second time in a delivery room but he seemed at home anyway.

Kuroko was soothing their baby in the meantime while he pressed out his placenta. The nurse had begun to wipe him down a bit which he was immensely thankful for. Maybe he should try a home-birth next time. Japan had been okay but here in America, birthing in a hospital was somehow ... unpleasant. To be honest, the whole country seemed unpleasant at times. He was happy Kagami had decided to quit his NBA career and play for Japan instead.

He wanted to be back home.

The nurse chatted some more, not exactly bothered that she did not get answers anymore. His mate had taken their daughter while a gynaecologist bustled in, did some kind of examination and proclaimed him healthy enough to be brought back to the ward. She stepped next to Kagami, admiring him more than actually looking at their child, gushing over how beautiful their baby was while looking at his mate.

Well. Good thing he had no reason to ever get jealous. Though he should take a bath soon and get some sleep to look more refreshed. Even his hands were a bloody mess after petting their newborn. In this country, everyone waited outside, no one respected the need for privacy after an event that felt a lot like being butchered. He asked Kagami for washing materials after he had dressed their daughter in baby clothes. Good mate that he was, he brought over a basin for Kuroko's hands before whipping him down himself, even though the Omega protested weakly – very weakly with how good that felt. Good mate.

He didn't even have to change the bed himself, his mate just carried him over and put their daughter in his arms before wheeling him out himself because he was tired of waiting for some nurse to come down and get him. In American hospitals, you sometimes waited for hours just to be brought from A to B when you had to stay in bed.

Just two more months and they could go home. Kuroko slept through the cheers of Kagami's teammates.

They had developed a routine for all the traveling they did over the years. Kuroko would take Shiro – and now Tsuki strapped to his back – while Kagami followed him with two luggage carriers full of bags and suitcases. So it was Kuroko's job to find their way through the airport which mostly worked without a problem. By now he knew Tokio airport like the back of his hand. This time he had been promised by Akashi to be taken home from the airport.

So he was not surprised to be greeted with flashlight, a smiling red-haired Alpha and a limosine waiting outside. Right now his friend was the talk of every Japanese gossip magazine again after disengaging his fiancée a month after his father's death. To the surprise of all, the other had had no hand in his father's demise – at least as long as you believed Akashi was unable to cause strokes. Kuroko at least wanted to believe that.

So now Akashi fought with Kise over the title of "most wanted bachelor" (though he never wanted it) which made paparazzis follow him everywhere. By tomorrow, his friend would most likely have an affair with Kuroko, with Kagami (at the same time without them knowing it) and might even be their daughter's illegitimate father if you believed the magazines. Admittedly, Tsuki looked a bit like him, having inherited light red hair and Kuroko's fair features. He was also her godfather which did not help the rumor-mill. His first question as soon as they were out of sight was of course: "How is my baby princess?"

"She did not like flying." Kuroko sank against his mate, closing his eyes as soon as his head touched his shoulder. "She cried until she lost consciousness. The other passengers stared holes into us."

"It's what you have me for." His mate kissed his head but pushed him back a bit. "Let me buckle up Shiro, I'll take her then."

"Taiga was great. He carried her up and down the aisle, followed by everyone's complaining over her crying. I would have broken down in his stead, I was close to crying for hours."

"You are just very sensitive, no one was complaining. Grumpy babies are hard to calm down, everyone knows that. You kept Shiro entertained, so it was all in order." Kagami had buckled their daughter off Kuroko's back. "Here, Akashi, take your little princess. If she wakes and cries, she's your responsibility."

The Omega laughed humorlessly and shook his head, telling his mate: "You're

horrible.”

“I spent fourteen hours with a siren next to my ear. You just said you wouldn’t have made it. Right now, I need a break.” Kagami wrapped his arms around his mate and dragged him onto his lap. “Give me a minute to recharge.”

“I gather it was nerve-wracking.” Akashi held their little angel who had not exactly been angelic for the duration of their flight. “Do you want me to hire a nurse for the night, so that you can sleep for a bit?”

“Big mighty CEO can’t handle a baby?” Kagami smirked at him but closed his eyes again. “No, Shiro will sleep like a rock and after being fed, even Tsuki will have a few hours of rest. I can do that before I crash.”

Kuroko did not really hear more of the conversation, his world went black.

He woke to his daughter’s cries, stumbling from an unknown bed in an unknown room – at least Kagami was next to him, so it was most likely alright – to her crib. Due to the fact that it was bright daylight outside, he checked his phone to find that he had been asleep for six hours. He had not been able to have so much sleep for months.

Kagami neither. So he was very sorry to wake his mate but he did not know where the other had put the formula, bottles and other stuff. After feeding, cleaning and cuddling their daughter, they decided to wake their son and spent the rest of the afternoon awake, so that they might be able to have less jet-lag by tomorrow. Good thing this was moving back and not just visiting, flying with small children was just horrible, no matter how adorable they were elsewhere.

They met Akashi again on the next day’s evening, having simply decided to stay where they were because their shipped belongings had not arrived yet, so they would have no furniture if they moved into their new home now. Kuroko was quite sure his friend had no problem at all with them staying in his mansion, it was big enough for fifty families at least and he lived here all alone. The smile that took over Akashi’s face when he found them in one of the living rooms spoke volumes. Most likely his friend had been lonely over here, never one to actually socialize much. With Midorima, Murasakibara and Kuroko caring for their kids, he did not have many people to meet with. Actually, he might have none at all.

“Welcome back.” Kuroko said lightly, happy to see his friend’s expression brighten even more. “Forgive my directness but are you seeing anyone right now? I don’t mean romantically, even just friends-”

“I am sorry to have worried you.” Akashi nodded to Kagami and sat down on the carpet next to Tsuki who was gnawing on a toy. “Am I this easy to read?”

“You look extremely lonely” Kuroko told him and observed the reaction.

It wasn’t hard as the other just nodded and began to tickle Tsuki who squealed in joy and grabbed the finger to examine it with her hands and mouth. After a long moment in which even Kagami seemed to stay quiet, he said: “Now that my father is dead, I am free for the first time. Free to think about what I like, to make decisions about my own life ... do I even want this job? I don’t know. Who do I want to be friends with? What kind of person could be my partner in life? And what life even? Do I really want to live in this house that ... holds so many bad memories.” He just observed the baby girl that gnawed on his finger now. “I know enough about my preferences to know I want an Omega mate and kids and I like work ... my job is good enough, I guess. But the rest just seems a mess to me.”

“As far as I heard, you opened company kindergardens and employed a lot of Omegas. Did you know that you are my mother’s new boss?”

"Am I?" Akashi looked up with a smile. "Where does she work now?"

"At your second headquarter in Tokio. She really likes her job." Kuroko disentangled his friend's fingers from his daughter's mouth. "You still need those."

"Then I'll definitely keep my job. It's good to be able to do something sensible and make a change. I was also told that those kindergardens are like some kind of partnership platform for all those Alpha employees we have. As our corporation picks the best of the best, it seems a lot of Omegas were able to leave their bad partners for Alphas treating them better. I made it a corporate policy that respect for Omegas is expected or employees can get fired on the grounds of discrimination."

"But you haven't seen anyone you like?" Kuroko drew up his eyebrows.

"I ... haven't spent a lot of time near a kindergarden. I have neither kids nor anyone I could visit there." Akashi looked at Tsuki again, a slight blush on his face. "I mean, it would be suspicious if I showed up there, right?"

"You could visit my mother. Tell her hi for me and ask her if she has ideas how to optimize the kindergardens. You are working in the Tokio branch right now, right?" And most likely his mother would have some ideas who to pair up his friend with. She had a good nose for such things.

"Hm ... yeah, I could do that. Do you know if she is working tomorrow? Her name is Kuroko as well?"

"Yes, she raised me by herself." He laid a hand on Akashi's arm. "It would reassure me to know you aren't working yourself to the grave while the rest of us lead a happy life."

"Daiki is single as well, you know. I am not the only one without a partner."

"I am not sure that comparing yourself to Aomine is a good idea. So Kise had found someone?" He hadn't known that. All he got about their friend was that he was seen with one model or actress after the next.

"I gathered he has a secret relationship with his old team captain. Was that information wrong?" Akashi tilted his head.

"Really? I didn't know that. I never exactly asked ... last thing I know he was still having a secret relationship with Aomine but that ended years ago. Come to think of it, Aomine said something about being found out by Kise's captain ... I always thought they were just friends. So there was more to it after all."

"They are living together, so I thought they must be serious. But maybe they really are friends and I got the wrong impression."

"Anyway, even Aomine won't stay single for long. He plans to ask Momoi out when he's out of therapy. In a few months, you won't have any excuses left."

"Oh my." Akashi smiled crookedly. "Your uncle really has to pull himself together, little princess. No more drowning myself in work."

"You are nearly twenty. That's kind of late for still being single." Kuroko picked up said princess and sniffed her, deciding to change her diapers soon. "At this rate, I'll have another baby before you share your first kiss."

"My first kiss was with you" The other countered.

"Oi!" Kagami finally intervened. "Don't flirt up my husband."

"He is easy to tease." Akashi smiled but nodded and took some distance from Kuroko.

"So how is life treating you?"

"Fairly well. They want me in tomorrow for training." The readhead grinned.

"I miss basketball" Akashi admitted. "Maybe I should go professional after all? I could restructure and manage the company on the side."

"Sounds awesome." The grin widened. "You'll take Kasamatsu's place in no time. With

Murasakibara as center, you as point-guard, Aomine and me as power forwards, we just need a decent shooter ... Mibuchi Reo is playing for the JBL, isn't he? Damn, you don't think we could get Midorima to come back, do you?"

"No, he enjoys med school. He's also not allowed to play with the potential of getting pregnant."

"Idiotic rule." Kagami rolled his eyes. "Actually, if Kasamatsu is with Kise—"

"That's why their relationship is secret." Akashi leant back and smiled. "Though I can't really see that happening. I still don't want to take the starter position from him, he is a great point guard."

"You are still better. Let's overtake the NBA, I've got some bone with my ex-teammates."

"You quit one year after joining." The CEO looked at Kuroko though. "What happened?"

"I refused to play when Tetsu had our daughter. I did not want to miss that. They called me a sappy idiot and blamed their loss on me, so I decided I had enough of them." Kagami huffed. "They've got nothing but basketball on their minds. Even before, they sometimes made derogatory comments regarding Omegas which I did not appreciate."

"I am not sure the JBL is better but at least all their top tier players are friends and know Kuroko. I don't think any of them would laugh at someone who once beat them." Akashi looked down. "On another note, have you already eaten?"

"We ate with Shiro. It's already past his bedtime." Kuroko looked around for his oldest. "Shiro, time for bed!"

"No!" The three-year-old yelled immediately, looking up from the blocks he had build houses with.

Tsuki used her chance to begin crying as well, filling the room with the sounds of two unhappy children. Kuroko just sighed and looked at his mate.

"I take Shiro, you teach our princess' godfather to change nappies." Kagami got up and went over to his son. "Up with you, little demon!"

Shiro ran laughing, his father hot on his heels. Kuroko had to laugh watching them, seeing his mate letting their son go again and again as if by accident. With a shake of his head, he turned to Tsuki and picked her up. Akashi actually got up as well, so he asked: "You really want to learn?"

"I have to train for my own children. Akashis always know what they are doing, it's an image I plan to keep. Perfectly changing nappies sounds like a useful skill." He lowered his voice. "When your mate pushed her into my arms yesterday, I thought I'd get a heart attack."

Kuroko chuckled and rocked Tsuki to tone down her crying. He admitted completely out of context: "I really look forward to seeing everyone again."