

Wounds

A perpetrator's perspective

Von Gepo

Kapitel 16: A way to mend a broken heart

"Momoi agreed to talk to me," Kuroko informed him.

"When?" Aomine grabbed his pillow and pressed it against his chest. The hole that had been there since Momoi walked out on him pained whenever he thought about her.

"Later today. I'll call later to tell you about it." The other breathed out and in again.

"How are you holding up?"

"Well ... not too bad, I guess. I spoke with Murasakibara and Himuro yesterday and met their daughter Hana-chan. Did you know she has orange hair?"

"Yeah, they sent me a photo. She is very cute."

"Why do you get photos? I want photos too."

"Then maybe you should be nicer to Murasakibara," Kuroko chided him.

"I know. I apologized to him yesterday for always joking about him and calling him an idiot. He didn't really care, said he never actually took it as an insult."

"I think he did. At least back in middle school, he did. Maybe he stopped caring in between but back then, he got pissed every time you joked about him. It was quite mean."

"Yeah, I know ... I'm really thankful he forgave me. It's kinda amazing what some people forgive. You too. You're pretty amazing for still talking to me."

There was a moment of stunned silence before he got an answer: "Thank you."

"Yeah, it's amazing how often I just say negative stuff. My therapist called me out on that too. I'm trying to be more positive." He sighed. "It feels like getting a complete make-over."

"The core is still you. Before your brother died, you were ... you were really great. I loved you so much. That positive, optimistic boy full of energy, I loved him so very much. It's him I suffered for. He is still in you, somewhere buried beneath all that abuse you put yourself through."

Babump. Gods, that sounded ... he wanted to be that person. He wanted to return to being someone others looked up to, loved for who he was. He had knew how to do that once. Back when his all and everything had been basketball, when he had had dreams and hope. When his days had been filled with things he had loved because he had spent his time outside to follow his dreams. Once upon a time when he had still believed in the good in life.

"I hang on to you because sometimes you remind me that this person is still inside you. When I can talk to him, I feel like all the bad things in life aren't so bad after all. When I think about what happened, I always hope that I was able to save that

goodness inside of you instead of just adding to the hurt you heaved on him."

"The hurt I heaved on him?" He snorted. "It wasn't exactly my decision."

"It was. You are the one who decides if you are a victim or if you suffered through it for a reason. You decide if you want to be a victim or not. I refuse to be one. I chose my suffering. I don't know if the result was worth the price, but I learned from it."

"So it was your decision to lose Aoki?" Damn it. He had just said that to hurt Kuroko. Was he an idiot or what? He wanted to keep their friendship, damn it.

"No. But it was my decision to risk him by telling you what I did. I put you, put an "us" above the safety of our child. To be honest, I never expected you to react like that but it was still my decision. I lost something very precious but gained knowledge that helped me in finding the perfect mate."

So that was how Kuroko lived through all that. He took all the blame. Or didn't he?

"But you don't forgive me?"

"Hurting me like that was your decision. I don't appreciate it, even though I learned from it. I certainly won't thank you for nearly driving me to suicide."

"What?" Aomine blinked in shock.

"Aomine, I birthed seven dead babies. Five of them were recognizable as humans. You raped me, beat me up, offered me as a sexual toy to Kise and humiliated me more often than I want to remember. When my suicidal thoughts got out of control, I gave up on you. I did it all for you – though I know you never asked for it – and in the end, I failed. Still, it was my decision to try. Just like it was your decision to sink into your world of suffering." The last sentence was said in an annoyed tone. "Don't make it out to be something that inevitably happened. Staying positive is hard, but it's the only way if you want to live happily. I learned to do that. Therapy will help you get there but only if you want it to. If you continue to decide that your childhood was shit and you'll be doomed forever, no one will get you out of that role of a victim. It is your decision."

His decision. A decision to be a victim or a perpetrator. Offended or offender. Did he want to be a product of his parent's hate and negligence or someone who rose from the ashes? Did he want to be someone who couldn't help but rape his best friend or someone who made an mistake he atoned for? Kuroko was right in a way. Other people lost their baby brothers too, they didn't go and nearly kill others for it. In a way, that had been his decision.

That was a damn hard pill to swallow.

"I'll think about that," he promised before canceling the call.

The ringing of his phone woke him up. He blinked confusedly before slowly putting one and one together and grabbing his phone. Kuroko again.

"Good evening, Aomine. Were you asleep?"

"Ugh, yeah, I ... I thought about your words but I got a headache, so I went to sleep."

He shook his head to wake him. "Sorry, I'm awake now."

"I spoke with Momoi."

Oh gods. This would hurt. Did he really want to hear? Maybe he should just give up, spare himself the pain. There was no way she would ever forgive him, was there? He closed his eyes again and concentrated on his breathing, just like he had learned in training. Controlled breathing helped to control pain. Even emotional one.

"She says she took your advise and resigned from the team."

Yeah. He had expected that. It still hurt. So this was what it felt like to be left.

"She applied for the K-Tokio university and will take entrance exams in two months."

She decided on sports medicine." Kuroko took a small pause. "She also decided on sending you a letter with her questions. She wants you to answer them honestly and will decide how to proceed from there."

"Thank god." Aomine sighed deeply. "You actually talked her into giving me a chance?"

"I won't lie, it took a lot of convincing."

"I'm sure it did. Thank you, Tetsu. Really. I know I really fucked up."

"You did. She told me what you said to her. Don't ever do that to me. Momoi is a very strong woman, you should appreciate her more."

"I know." And wasn't that what everyone told him? Coach, his therapist, his best friend. His conscience. "It's just so hard sometimes. I'm scared of how much she means to me."

"I wish you would tell her that. Knowing it by trying to interpret your actions or by hearing it are very different. Especially when you are hurting, the second is lot more important." There was a bit of childish laughter on the line. "Shiro, I am on the phone, please play a bit quieter."

"Nah, it's nice to hear. It reminds me that the world keeps on spinning and my problems are just small compared to what happens on this planet." Aomine rolled on his back. "If I write her, what do you think will happen?"

"Either she continues writing or she will want more questions answered in person. She did hint that you only told her about the hunts and not the rest. She explicitly asked me not to tell her, but she knows the rest will be worse. Before talking to you again in person, she wants to know everything, I'm sure."

"Are you okay with me telling her?" This time he at least remembered to ask.

"Frankly, no, I'm not. But it can't be stopped now. I'll expect questions from her as well. You did rip it all open with this." Kuroko sighed deeply. "It can't be helped. For once, I am happy to be on the other side of earth, but it also feels strangely detached. I wish you'd done this while I was still in Japan."

"Will you be okay?" Again, he had not thought his actions through, had not considered what he might do to other people with the stuff he did. It disgusted him how self-centered his mind worked sometimes.

Kuroko was silent for quite a while. Aomine gave him space. Sometimes answers were hard, he knew. Learning to endure silence was something he had learned from Mitobe. After about half a minute, the other answered: "You know, I always think 'This is the last time'. I worked through this with every one of you, with Taiga, with my mother, my counselor – every time I told myself that this was the last time. Now I'll go through it with Satsuki, it's the same thing over and over, and I'm just so tired of talking it over again and again."

"Then don't." Aomine drew his eyebrows together. "Tell her you don't want to talk this through again and to go give her questions to me. It's only fair, I dragged this up again."

"While it sounds marvelous in theory, you do tend to make things more complicated. I am sorry to say, but I do not trust you to steer her in the right direction with your answers."

"What direction?"

"To regard it as a thing of the past that is not important to me anymore." Kuroko sighed. "It happened. I learned from it. It is over. It does not impact my life anymore. It made me who I am and I like who I am. I don't want to be treated like an egg that could break."

"But you didn't want me to tell her." In the same moment he said it, he knew it had

been a dumb idea.

"Because I hate what it does to people knowing this about me! Some treat me like glass, some with disdain, some like you seem to think it is okay to treat me like an object or at least something they can do whatever they want with. It's subtle changes that I just can't stand sometimes. It's bad enough to be an Omega, people treat you as subhuman, but an Omega slut?"

He should keep silent. He should just shut his fucking mouth and not aggravate Kuroko further. He shouldn't say what was on the tip of his tongue: "Isn't that how you treat yourself?"

"What?" That exclamation was full of viciousness, of unbridled anger.

"You just said I treat you like an object, not a person. I hurt you. Often even, but until last week you never said a word. Why do you let yourself be treated like that if you resent it so much?" It was the same as with Momoi. She also did not want to be treated like that, but she let him because she knew he could be even harsher than that. It wasn't like that was okay though. It was why he wanted to change after all.

"But ... I ... what-" Kuroko drew a sharp breath. "Aomine?"

"Don't let people treat you that way. It's not okay. Just because a lot of others don't defend themselves, it's not okay to treat you like that as well. Don't let people hurt you. Call them out on their bullshit, call me out on my bullshit. Hell, call Akashi out on his, and don't tell me it's okay how he treats you. Turn around, look at your baby boy and remind yourself what you don't want him to learn or to be. If you can't defend yourself for your own peace of mind, do it for his. He should not learn that it is okay to be an asshole." He huffed. "You're much too nice and forgiving. It's good for me but it's bad for you. And one day, when I can treat you right, it will be bad for me as well, because I'll watch you forgive horrible people and that will hurt much more than it already does."

He could hear quiet sobs on the other end. Gods, it hurt his soul. Just why, why did he always hurt people, even when he tried to do good? After a deep draw of breath Kuroko said: "I'll call back tomorrow."

Momoi's letter was in his mailbox the next morning. Postal stamp and everything, so she didn't come to his house. She even wrote it on computer and printed it out, as formal as could be. He really must have hurt her deeply. He would write back by hand and bring the letter to her mailbox in person. Most of the questions were those he knew, those she had written down. She had added some about his behavior, why he had lied to her, what had made him so afraid. He answered all of them as honestly as possible.

Doctor Enjoji was right, practice made perfect. He wrote the whole letter in one go instead of throwing away draft after draft. Honesty was something instinctive, something that just was and got only worse by thinking about it. So he wrote down exactly what came to mind, only slightly adjusted in choice of words. It would take a while for all those curses to leave his thoughts.

The rest of the day was spent with sports. He was allowed to train until his ribs hurt, so he did that, showered, then trained some more. It made him pleasantly worn out when he checked his phone in wait for Kuroko's call. Same thing here actually – just some weeks ago he would have dreaded the fallout of his words last night. This time he knew they would work it out. So he was a bit surprised to find an e-mail from Kuroko:

*Dear Aomine,
you really surprised me yesterday, so I needed a bit of time to think things through. Actually, I still need more time, so I won't call today. But I wanted to thank you for your words. They really moved me in a positive way. You are right, I let people treat me horribly. It's less than before, but I still do. I need to work on that. When we meet again, I want to be someone that can get angry when mistreated. And you taught me something else I need to change. I debated with myself and with Taiga over telling you about it and he is not happy that I decided on being honest. When you told me those things yesterday, I wanted to sleep with you. I am very happy I am on the other side of the planet right now, because I fear I would do something very stupid if I was in Japan. When praised I react with sexual offers. I didn't want that to be true, but you are right, I behave like a slut. It happened with you; it happened with Akashi. I am endangering my marriage with my behavior. I know this is a hard thing to ask because you like me (and thought of me as something like your partner for quite some time), but if I ever offer myself to you refuse me. Even more, call **me** out on that as my kind of bullshit, if I may use your words. I don't want to be that way. I want to be able to accept praise without feeling like I need to give something back. Especially not my body. Please protect me from myself; just like I will do my utmost to learn how to protect you from your more nasty side.
Your best friend, Tetsu*