

# Not good enough

Von Gepo

## Kapitel 23: Blessings and misgivings

Tatsuya had sent Taiga a message that he wanted to meet him before his game with Rakuzan. His ex-brother replied that that was fine and texted a meeting spot and time. Of course it was a basketball court. Tatsuya had to shake his head in amusement. Really, Taiga had always been the same, never changing, never to be deterred. The whole drama had happened in his own head and he had hurt his brother in the process.

Taiga was wearing their ring. He was standing there, his head down, looking much too small for his tall body. Such a boy. Somehow Atsushi seemed more mature, even though intellectually and emotionally he was only four. When he looked at his boyfriend, he saw a man. When he looked at Taiga, it was a mix between his sexy body and his childish naive self. He really had a thing for immature characters, hadn't he? Tatsuya smiled up at his ex-brother.

"I want to ... I don't want us to be strangers," Taiga told him.

"You could never be a stranger, Taiga. We grew up together." He grabbed his own chain and ring from his pocket and showed it to him. "This is sacred. I really wanted you to be my brother. But I sabotaged myself, I lied to myself. I can't be your brother." Taiga looked at him with hurt in his eyes.

Tatsuya did not need him to speak to answer his question: "No, you did nothing wrong. I was in the wrong and I didn't open up about it. It's my fault."

"Will you tell me now?" Those red eyes sparkled with something like hope.

Tatsuya nodded and smiled. He took off his scarf and showed Taiga the bites littering his neck. None of them was a mating mark because he hadn't been in head but they said enough.

"You're an Omega?" Taiga's eyes widened.

"You are obtuse, you oaf." It felt so good to finally say that. "You never noticed. You never noticed how I blossomed, how I went from boy to adult, how brotherhood turned into love and desire."

Taiga squeaked like a pig. It might have been cute if he didn't look that panicked.

"Yes, Taiga, I was in love with you. I desired you. I guess I still do. But I found someone I rather want to be with." He stroked his own neck. "I wanted to end our brotherhood because I couldn't stand the thought of desiring someone I called my brother. I wanted our brotherhood to end to be able to court you. But then I found someone ... well." He smiled fondly. "I guess by now the question is naught. Someone else claimed me and I am happy with him."

Taiga looked like a deer caught in headlights. When his eyes seemed able to move, they moved up and down over Tatsuya's figure before the Alpha turned his body as if

to run away. He stopped himself in the middle of the movement and stared at Tatsuya again.

"Why did you never tell me?" His voice was a mixture of curiosity and panic.

Oh why? Because he loved their easy camaraderie, their friendship, their shared love for basketball. He loved to have a brother. He never wanted anything to come between them, especially not his own feelings. How should he ever put that into words? He said: "You were too precious to me. I did not want to lose you."

"Because you knew I would not return your feelings?"

Tatsuya had guessed so. It still hurt to know. Taiga had never seen him as anything else than a brother, a rival, a friend. He had never seen him as someone desirable, as a man. He had never been a possible partner.

"I'm sorry." Taiga looked torn over something. "I am in love with someone, I cannot return your feelings."

"I know." His eyes filled with tears, his throat closed up. Why? He had known. He had always known, it was why he never told Taiga. "I know. Damn it." His hand clenched around the chain.

"I love you as a brother." Taiga turned back to him. "I don't think that will ever change. I want you in my life. But I want you to accept my future mate too."

"I give you and Kuroko my blessings, even if you don't need them." Tatsuya breathed out shakily to avoid sobbing. "I wish you the best of luck. Just treasure him, will you? I want you to be happy."

"I will." The other man sighed and nodded. "I will treasure him and be happy." He stepped closer and looked at the bitten neck. "Will you?"

Yes. He would. He would have said so if he hadn't sobbed. Taiga put his arms around him and held him close. Why did it hurt so much? Why? He had thought he was over him.

"I'm sorry." Taiga petted his head. "I never noticed."

"It's good you didn't," he said between sobs.

"Yeah ... I like being with Kuroko. He's like a bird. He can fly but he needs a nest."

"Aren't you a poet?" Tatsuya teased the other with a smile. "Believe it or not, Atsushi is less oblivious than you are. I'm fine with him protecting me."

"You would have always tried to protect me, never letting me be the strong one."

"That's what you need?" Tatsuya shook his head. Taiga had always been his little brother. The one he taught, the one he protected, the one he held his hand out for.

"It's what I want in a mate. Someone strong and fragile at the same time. You always tried to be the strong one."

"I am fragile too." He showed that side to no one but Atsushi though. "It's my mate's right to see that side of me."

"I hope he'll make you happy." Taiga smiled at him and took a step back. "So who is the guy?"

"Really?" Tatsuya raised an eyebrow. "Obtuse doesn't cut it."

"Hey, I'm no brain, I know, okay?" The redhead clenched his fists. "Cut me some slack."

"Murasakibara Atsushi. Does that ring a bell?"

"Oh, that one." Taiga stared into the distance for a moment. "He's really childish, isn't he?"

"I don't think I want to hear that from you." Tatsuya was able to smile though.

"Yeah, you're right." The Alpha scratched his head. "Does he make you happy?"

He nodded once.

"That's good." Taiga looked at him for a moment. "Will he really quit basketball?"

"No, he won't."

"Oh, good. I felt bad after that. I want to play him again."

"We will play again and again." Tatsuya grinned. "Prepare to lose, Taiga."

The finals were ... it was hard to put into words. Akashi wasn't called "the emperor" because he had legions of people following him. He simply ruled the court. If Kuroko and Taiga (and Tatsuya knew that Kuroko was the most important factor here) hadn't shocked him so much, Akashi would have won without fail. And while Taiga was impressive, seeing Kuroko adapt to new threats in seconds, thinking up new strategies and employing them was a humbling experience. Tatsuya knew he was a better shooter, a better small-forward even, but he wasn't a strategist. Kuroko came up with things no one else would have thought of. He was a true trickster.

Tatsuya was filled with energy, all pumped up for practice. His teammates looked at him as if he was insane, especially Atsushi. But he explained to them what he wanted them all to learn, what he wanted Atsushi to learn and somewhere during their flight back their captain was full of energy as well, even though he would not play any more tournaments with their team.

He would make Atsushi into the perfect player, his boyfriend would be Japan's number one. Even with Aomine, Kise, Akashi, Midorima and Taiga aiming for the spot, his boyfriend and future mate would be the one to humble them all. Tatsuya would be by his side through it all. He swore to himself: Atsushi would stand on top.

"What if he won't become a basketball player?," teacher Tsueda asked him.

Tatsuya blinked in surprise. What kind of question was that? What else should Atsushi be? It wasn't like he had a whole range of ... oh. Yeah. He asked what would be if Atsushi did not get a job. He answered: "I will have to ask my parents for help."

"Would they help out?"

"I am sure of that." Tatsuya leaned back and thought for a moment. "With how much Atsushi eats, opening a restaurant might be a good idea. He is good at baking. He's in my home economics class, you know? We make a pretty good team. It's something that might be possible with kids. We could move to America and open a Japanese restaurant."

"Are your classes going well? Even with your heats?"

"I am used to it. They don't bother me, I'm good at school." He made up for what Atsushi couldn't do. What he lacked was a body that did not give out on him. Being unable to work one week out of four was unbelievably annoying.

"And do you think you can get him to work even if you are in heat yourself?" Tsueda raised a questioning eyebrow.

"Well ... yes, that's the hard part, I guess. I can get him to wear condoms even when I am not exactly conscious, that's something I am quite proud of right now."

The teacher smiled in amusement.

"I have to train myself in that. It's inexcusable if he doesn't go to school or work. He really needs it and Akashi is paying a huge amount of money for him to train reading, writing and basketball. So there's no skipping school or practice, no matter what my body demands." Tatsuya sighed deeply. "Easy to say but it will be so hard."

"I suppose so." Tsueda nodded slowly. "I have nothing against your mating, I think you are a great couple and I thank you for considering Atsushi. But if he starts missing school, your dorm room will be taken again."

"I see." The Omega nodded. "That was to be expected, I guess." Consequences for

unwanted actions. In that regard Tsueda was a strict one. He had to be with the boys he taught.

His mother enthusiastically wished him the best of luck and congratulated him on finding someone he wanted to stay with. It was only on the surface though. Somehow it wasn't hard to hear that behind her nice and supportive words, she did not want him to be with Atsushi. She liked him a lot, but she wanted someone better for her son.

Tatsuya understood. It still hurt. He wished she would be able to actually be happy for him. Most of all he wished she would be honest. He had never expected he would one day wish for more honesty from his mother but here they were. She tried to be nice out of guilt, he did not want to call her out on that. What a vicious cycle.

He saved the most unpredictable conversation for last. He asked for a phone date with Atsushi's mom. He had thought before that she would be delighted if he was taken off her hands. But was that true? After his own mother's reaction, he wasn't so sure anymore. She had never even met him. And what if she was happy? What if she cried again and thanked him overly much? Being raised into the heavens was somehow just as bad as being humiliated and degraded.

Or was it his fault? Was he the one who could not, would not believe them? Was he too doubtful and they actually meant what they said? He didn't know who he could trust. Himself? Them? None? He wished it was easier. He wished he could simply fall in love and not care about tomorrow. He wished there wasn't any Alpha/Omega or pregnancy business to think of, forcing people to bond at too young an age. Everyone should be free to choose who they loved.

But it wasn't to be. So he had to live with what he had. He had debated with himself whether to call Atsushi's mother from that one's dorm or from the teacher's lounge. As he expected her to get very emotional – and not in a good way – he decided on the teacher's lounge and asked teacher Tsueda for help again. So they sat together after school and the older man called her.

"Good afternoon, Misses Murasakibara. Yes, this is Atsushi's teacher. I have your son's boyfriend Himuro Tatsuya here with me. Yes, that's right. Atsushi is well, don't worry. Yes, yes, shall I give the phone to Tatsuya? Yes, thank you, the same to you."

That sounded quite normal. She greeted him full of cheer and expectancy and inquired after his health.

"Fine, thank you. How do you do?" He gave her some time to answer. "Yes, Atsushi and I are still in a relationship. He's doing really well. We were fifth in the national championship."

"Oh, that's nice. It's so good that you are full of energy."

"Yeah, I am really hoping that Atsushi will be able to become a professional player."

"That would be good, yes. I don't think Mister Akashi will support him forever. It would be nice if he could hold a job."

Well, not exactly the cheer he wanted but good enough. He said: "I guess if that does not work out, we'll think of something together. He is a great baker."

"Oh, is he? I didn't know that." Somehow she sounded a lot prouder about that than the whole basketball prowess but maybe it was more relatable to her.

"I thought about some possibilities for our future. Atsushi will need someone at his side to navigate through life."

"You would do that?" Her voice was full of disbelief.

"He is my boyfriend, isn't he? Or did you want to have him back with you after

school?" That would give the whole affair a new perspective.

"Well, I had guessed I would have to take him back..." Didn't that sound happy and full of cheer?

"If you allow me to, I will continue to look after him."

"Really?," she whispered. It was followed by a pause of a few seconds. "Why would you do that?"

"Because I love him." Tatsuya clenched his fist. It was a legitimate question, no reason to get angry. Everyone would wonder. She didn't know her son as man. She never visited. Had she visited him in middle-school or had she not seen him for four years? He had to close his eyes and take a deep breath.

"You must hate me, right? I am such a bad mother." She sobbed. "I am sorry. I'm sorry I can't be there for him-"

"Please don't cry, Misses Murasakibara. It's alright. I'll look after him. If you give your consent, I'll take him as my mate and off your hands." He was too angry for more niceties. He could not stand her tears, her helplessness. If her son was too much for her, she could just hand him over in his opinion.

"I am so sorry. It's all my fault. If I had just looked after him more attentively, he would have never-"

"Misses Murasakibara, it's no use to live in the past. What happened, happened. Atsushi is how he is. I like the person he is now. I understand that it's hard for you to see him this way but it's not hard for me. So please give your consent to our mating." He looked at teacher Tsueda who gave him a hand-gesture to calm down a bit. Tatsuya tried to regulate his emotions.

"I ... can I see him first?" She was still teary.

"You are his mother, you can visit as often as you want." If she could behave herself and not break into tears every time she saw him.

"You'll let me?" There was a tentative hope in her voice. "Mister Akashi told me to stay away from him. He said that I ... that I wasn't good for him. Whenever I visited, Atsushi would get out of control and act out for weeks."

Oh. That gave the whole thing a new perspective. He exchanged a glance with teacher Tsueda who looked as shocked as him. He answered: "Well, we can try, can't we? If that still happens, we'll talk about it afterwards. You are his mother after all. You should be allowed to see him."

"That's so nice of you!"

Yeah, well, was that even his decision? Okay, he had just asked her to hand her son over but that wasn't meant in terms of ownership. Atsushi was still human, he could make his own decisions. If he wanted to meet his mother, he could. Why had she listened to a thirteen- or fourteen-year-old boy making decisions about her son?

"It's not my decision, teacher Tsueda and coach Araki are looking after Atsushi as well. He is also able to make some decisions by himself. He wants to mate with me and everyone here is in favor of that. But you are the one making his final decisions for him, you are his mother."

"If all of you say it's the best, then I trust your decision." There was not a sliver of doubt in her voice. Did she really put this much trust in people she had never even met?

"When do you have time to visit?"

"How about New Years? I have some days off. We could celebrate together."

"That sounds nice! Teacher Tsueda, are you here on New Years?," he asked the man beside him.

"Either me or coach Araki will be here, so someone can supervise." The older man nodded.

"Great. See you at New Years. I am really looking forward to meeting you!" And it would be exactly one week before his next heat. Perfect timing.

"Oh, I am so happy! See you then! Oh, wait, what can I bring? Does Atsushi have a wish? More Lego maybe?" She sounded really excited.

"He always loves to have more Lego."

"Great. I'll bring some. I saved the money I would have send for food, I can buy him something nice from that. Oh, I am so happy I won't have to worry anymore. Thank you, Mister Himuro! Thank you so much."

"Sure." He simply blinked. How was he supposed to react to that? Did that mean she was okay with their mating? "See you in a bit."

"Bye-bye!" She hung up.

Tsueda und Tatsuya looked at the other for a moment. After a moment, the teacher took the phone and put it down. They both sat down in silence afterwards.

"So ... I guess that was the first time it didn't end in tears," the teacher concluded.

"That's nice ... are you sure she is ... well, normal in the head? I don't want to sound offensive but it's ... talking to her is really difficult."

"I can see Atsushi acting out. It could happen this time as well. He feels her fear, apprehension and guilt. I don't think it's easy to be around her, especially for him. If she does nothing but cry, we'll have to cut the visit short for Atsushi's sake."

"Did you know it was this bad?" Tatsuya leaned forward to speak in a softer tone. "Did you know that a thirteen-year-old boy forbid her to see her son and she actually followed that command?"

"That left me speechless as well. But I can see Mister Akashi doing that."

Tatsuya slowly shook his head. Why was everyone acting as if you had to kiss the floor the guy walked on? He was charismatic, he had money, yeah, but ... anyway, who would want to live with that kind of pressure? Who would want to live with such expectations?

"You know, I don't want to burden you with all this but I really think you are by leagues better than what would wait for Atsushi if you weren't there. I am unbelievably thankful you decided on mating with him. I promise to be there for you whenever you need me." Tsueda took his hand and squeezed before letting go. He stood and seemed full of energy. "So, let's prepare Atsushi for his mother's visit. He hasn't seen her in four years. This will be hard on him."

"I can't even imagine not seeing my mother for four years. He's still such a good boy." Who had been there for him all this time? Akashi and Midorima? Had he ever had a dependable adult in his life? How had he learned to be as normal as he was now? "I really need to go hug him."

"Do that." There was a glimmer in Tsueda's eyes, he seemed close to tears. "I'm not allowed to hug the boys, otherwise he would get a big hug from me too."

Tatsuya just nodded and left the lounge to look for his boyfriend.