

Not good enough

Von Gepo

Kapitel 26: The emperor

Tatsuya placed Atsushi next to him, followed by Takao – who was a really, really nice fellow – and his boyfriend “Shin-chan”. Seeing Midorima in the flesh had finally clicked who exactly this “Shin-chan” was. So Atsushi wasn’t the only one who had actually found someone for a healthy relationship. Watching the other couple interact brought home how much of a disturbed group the Generation of Miracles had been. Midorima seemed to be a very neurotic character. Tatsuya wasn’t exactly sure what Takao saw in him but most others would question his own choice as well. He would not question anyone else, he knew how hard it was when everyone thought you were making a bad choice.

It disturbed him a bit how easily Midorima assumed the role of a parental guardian again. Atsushi seemed used to listen to him, even if the green-haired boy sounded mostly annoyed. He spoke as if Atsushi should already know all he said or remember it by himself. Midorima did not seem to grasp the extent of Atsushi’s mental disability. He could not remember what was told him once. Or twice. Or a hundred times. But all in all, the other boy cared and that was what mattered. Tatsuya introduced himself again to Midorima, thanked him for his care and politely asked him to leave Atsushi to himself. The other boy just blinked and silently nodded. Takao translated that to: “My boyfriend is sorry to not have grasped the situation correctly. He hopes you aren’t offended in any way.”

“Not at all. You couldn’t have known. But it’s hard for Atsushi to concentrate on more than one person helping him along.”

“And you are too harsh, Shin-chan.” Takao placed a peck on his boyfriend’s cheek.

“People will misunderstand your kind intentions if you use that tone of voice.”

“My tone?” Midorima scrunched his face.

“Yes, the way you say words. It’s harsh, strict and sounds angry. It does not sound helpful but rather aggressive.”

“Mine-chi is always angry,” Atsushi drawled.

“I am not.” Midorima turned his full body towards the giant and looked into his eyes. “I did not mean to sound angry. I am sorry I gave that impression.”

“Mine-chi wasn’t angry with me?” Atsushi seemed to need a moment to process that.

“Okay. Can I have kiritampo now?”

“We will wait for Taiga to open the buffet.” Tatsuya turned to his ex-brother who seemed to have a heated discussion with the blue-haired miracle. “Taiga? Can we dig in?”

“What?” The other boy looked forth and back between Tatsuya and Aomine. “Right! I challenge you to a food duel!”

"Sounds fun," Atsushi commented.

"Oh no, you are not joining something that barbaric. Now fill your plate, you can have as much as you want tonight." Tatsuya leaned up a bit and kissed his boyfriend before his lips would have another purpose for the next hours.

"Eh? Is that a bite mark?" Takao even went as far as to lightly tuck on Tatsuya's hoodie.

Atsushi growled at him for that, food completely forgotten. Midorima growled back, drawing Takao into his arms.

"Silence."

Everybody instinctively listened to that command and the room was filled with a deafening void of sound. Even Aomine and Taiga stopped in stuffing their plates and looked around with questioning gazes, finally following Akashi's gaze towards Atsushi. Tatsuya saw red, letting out a growl that turned into a hiss towards Akashi.

"Sorry, sorry!" Takao waved both of his hands. "My bad! Sorry, I didn't think. Can we stop with all the animal sounds now? We're all civilized people, right?"

"Yeah, you're scary, guys," Taiga added. He looked at Atsushi, Midorima and Akashi, but nobody could deny the tuft of light blue hair on the back of his shoulder that he was speaking for. "So why is everyone behaving like a cat that got stepped on its tail?"

"Just some sort of chain reaction." Takao wriggled out of his boyfriend's embrace.

"Hey, we're cool?" He held out his hand towards Tatsuya.

"Of course." He leaned forwards as well and shook it. "You overreacted, Atsushi."

"You as well, Shin-chan." Takao kissed his boyfriend anyway.

"Do I get a kiss?" Atsushi mumbled lowly.

"You get a plus point for intent but a minus point for behavior. You meant well but you overdid it. Takao is not a threat." He decided to kiss his boyfriend anyway.

"What the hell?" Aomine looked aghast. "Why is everyone kissing here?"

"Muro-chin is my mate. I am allowed to kiss him," Atsushi informed his former teammate.

Tatsuya smiled in amusement. He had planned on a less direct approach but this worked as well. He wasn't the only one getting outed tonight. Though Takao looked at his boyfriend in expectation and did not get any kind of reaction. Midorima was direly socially stunted, he did not even get the barest of hints.

"Really? With a bite mark and everything?" Kise's eyes sparkled in interest. "That is so cool, Murasakibaramacchi!"

"Tz." Aomine poked Taiga with his chopsticks. "What about our match?"

"Oh, uh, yeah." But instead of piling his mountain of food higher, Taiga turned to Kuroko and ruffled his hair. Said boy smiled back and after sharing an affectionate moment devoid of any movement, he moved back to his former seat between Momoi and Kise.

Momoi was just telling Atsushi how happy she was for him and wishing him good luck – she did not elaborate for what but it seemed to be about keeping Tatsuya happy – while Akashi somehow seemed to sink inside himself. He seemed small and dejected and his eyes unfocused. It was a bit scary to see and everyone seemed to give him a wide berth. It did look scary in a way. Like he wasn't really there, like he was talking with people from outer space or something. If he was daydreaming, it did not look like a pleasant dream.

"So you actually decided on Atsushi or did it just kinda happen?" Takao asked Tatsuya.

"I decided to do this." Somehow the question had not sounded insulting, so Tatsuya

felt free to answer with a voice full of happiness.

"That's cool. That's how it should be. If you're wondering, I actually decided on Shin-chan as well."

"Oi, Takao! I understood that." Midorima glared at his boyfriend.

"Pity." The raven-haired boy grinned though. "He actually gets my jokes now."

Tatsuya had to laugh about that. Takao was to be his new favorite person in this group of oddballs. He was sure that without him Midorima would not have been able to apologize to Atsushi like that. And let's be honest, his boyfriend had needed that apology to know that he had not been a bad person in Midorima's eyes. That boy mattered to his boyfriend.

Just like Akashi. Tatsuya tried to observe him for the next half hour as good as he could while behaving normally around others. He spiced up the soup, talked some more with Takao, moderated Atsushi's calorie intake a bit – at least so he ate more than chips and sweets – and scolded Taiga for being sick after his food contest. He had to smile back at Kuroko who looked really happy about all his friends being here with him. As long as Taiga was close, he seemed relaxed around everyone but Aomine. Seeing how longingly that one was sometimes looking at Kuroko, they seemed to share a history of a very toxic relationship. Tatsuya remembered Atsushi telling him that Kuroko had wanted to have Aomine's baby. Seeing as they were without one, Tatsuya was sure that that part was a rather sad story.

So for Kuroko Akashi wasn't the worst one, even if he had been the one to organize those rapes. Even though – if Atsushi was to be believed – it had been this Akashi's alter ego. Because he was facing a young man with two red eyes and he remembered clearly that before the Winter Cup, both had been differently colored. Atsushi had explained to him that after turning bad, one eye became golden. That was a rather easy way to differentiate personalities. Even if that had not been the case, it was rather noticeable once you knew.

This Akashi did look up instead of down. He smiled genuinely and was able to laugh about jokes. He did not give off the feeling of absolute superiority. He actually seemed rather approachable and nice. Still, there was something off about him. It was in the way he held his shoulders, in the edge of his smile, in the straightness of his spine. There was an air of "I am nice as long as I want to be, don't come close to my limits". It was also in the way every miracle did not even look at him when he looked back.

All of them were afraid of him. Everyone except for Kuroko who talked to the redhead as if nothing bad had ever happened. Could he differentiate that easily? What if the bad Akashi came back? Midorima and Atsushi both tried to always have a table between them and him. They were polar opposites and did not exactly like the other but they had no problem sitting next to each other and keeping as far from Akashi as possible.

Kise inched nearer towards Akashi and Kuroko who were still talking. For the lack of a better word, Kuroko seemed smitten with him. Tatsuya was amazed how Taiga did not even get any of that and obliviously talked with Aomine. Even that one sent concerned gazes over. Kise finally reached the couple and threw his arms around Kuroko, earning himself an immediate death glare from Akashi that wiped away every kind of nice facade. For the blink of an eye, there was a golden glint, enough to make Kise stumble back and apologize profusely.

Tatsuya had seen enough. Once a madman, always a madman. Red-eyed Akashi might be nice but golden-eyed Akashi was close enough to the surface that you could not

relax around him. And he was pretty sure that red-eyed Akashi wasn't the real one that was simply tormented by his big bad alter ego. Golden-eyed Akashi looked a lot more real than red-eyed one. The nice one was a facade, Tatsuya was sure about that. So how came Kuroko was this blended? Shouldn't he notice how scary and horrible Akashi was?

Tatsuya decided to ponder that standing in the kitchen and making more food. They had become a lot more people than planned and Atsushi and Aomine ate for at least ten people anyway. So he cooked rice and made some onigiri fillings. He was a bit surprised when he was suddenly asked from his right sight: "May I help?"

Tatsuya nearly screamed like a girl but was able to reign it in. Kuroko. Of course, he was a phantom, a ghost. You did not see him coming. After his heartbeat normalized again, he answered: "Of course. Can you form some?"

"Sure." They began to work side by side.

This would be the perfect moment to ask. Was it rude to ask? Kuroko was traumatized after all. Not only that, all of his rapists were present. It might be a bad idea to ask. But what other chances would he have? He decided to simply go with the flow: "Akashi is rather scary. How come you seem so comfortable around him?"

"I have known him for quite a while. He can be a bit strange but he never hurt me. Also, his anger has never been directed at me. I know he would never let harm come to me."

Tatsuya simply stopped all movements. What? Rather – what the fuck? Hadn't that guy organized gang rapes and Omega hunts on Kuroko? He looked at the other boy that peacefully formed onigiri. What was he to say to that? Was it okay to ask? He tried: "I understood from Atsushi that some bad things happened in middle-school and ... well, wasn't Akashi the one who had the idea?"

"I consented to his idea." Kuroko looked up to him. "So it's not like he hurt me against my will."

"Okay ... so you are not afraid of him in any way? Last time I heard, he tried to stab Taiga with a scissor. He is extremely possessive of you. I fear the moment Taiga actually becomes aware that he is an Alpha with an attractive Omega friend."

Kuroko blushed slightly which looked really cute on him. It was followed by an indulgent smile that told everyone looking how much he was in love. His gaze immediately found Taiga who sat beside Kise and Momoi that seemed to try to explain something about fashion to him.

Tatsuya decided to leave it at that. Somehow, Kuroko seemed not to be afraid for Taiga. Maybe Tatsuya was just overanxious when it came to Akashi. He just hoped his ex-brother would not meet some gruesome end at the madman's hands. He finally looked around for said man again and found him staring intently back at him, his eyes sharp and cutting. Tatsuya shivered and looked down again.

Akashi was dangerous. Nothing good would come from antagonizing him, nothing good would

come from confronting him. The best would be to keep his distance and keep Atsushi safe from him. It was the best there was. Maybe he should go as far as to thank the redhead for his continued support and leave it at that? It might just be the best for everyone. Let old grudges go, accept the fact that Akashi was a very scary being and keep peace. His Omega side urged him to submit.

He formed some onigiri into cats, bunnies and bears and brought Akashi his very own plate. He took it with gracious thanks as if there was nothing strange about being personally served. Only then did he bring one to his boyfriend. Atsushi smiled at him

but Tatsuya was able to see and smell the hurt on him.
Had he let his boyfriend down?