

Split soul

Von Gepo

Kapitel 11: Being alien to normalcy

Ayako seemed to have promised the kids they would visit the park together. On the way she told him some stories about places they went by, the people that lived there or which she had met. There was an old lady living alone, a young woman recently left by her husband, a pachinko parlor run by the local yakuza, her favorite conbini, an alley that was especially dark at night and should be avoided. She painted him a picture of what life in this neighborhood was like. Even the kids seemed to enjoy her stories, most of them innocent, some not so much. Of course both kids were intrigued by everything that sounded dangerous (Natsue more than Ryou), listening to Ayako's advice but not so secretly sneaking glances at the places. Akashi felt compelled to give his input once or twice to make sure they really would not go that way.

They arrived at a beautiful park half an hour later. Akashi had held himself back from asking if he should get his car, getting the feeling that the walk was part of the experience. The children looked for sticks, suddenly becoming pirates hunting for a treasure. While he and Ayako simply walked, both children ran around wildly, occasionally being called back by Ayako not to go too far. The baby had been awake for a while, cooing at leaves, the clouds and about every dog they met. For someone so small, it was amazing what he could see. Ayako played a game of look-and-peek with him, pointing at large things, waiting for Shinta to see them and give a reaction. After a few minutes he became sleepy though, so Ayako settled him against her chest.

"Doesn't he get heavy? Should I take him?" He asked her – not for the first time.

"Oh, yeah, he'll sleep for half an hour and will get fuzzy then." She passed him the baby. "I wish I could have at least one more child. I'd really like a boy. I love girls but boys are special too."

"You could adopt one, right?" A lot of couples adopted children, right? It were often children who could not be raised by their single Omega parents or which were abandoned due to being conceived by rape.

"Only married couples can adopt. I am not married anymore." Her smile was rather sad. "I often have Ryou and Shinta over though. A week a month I can feel like having three children."

None of them her own. He cautiously grabbed her hand, gauging her reaction before actually holding it in his. She allowed the touch, linking her fingers with his.

"It looks quite domestic, doesn't it? Couples, mothers with their children, families. All those smiling faces. Sometimes I ask myself how many people come here for the exact same reason I do. I don't have money for a lot of toys, so I spent all my time with Natsue outside on walks or at parks or in museums with free entrance. It is a nice place but my smile is still forced when I think that I have to be here because I can't

afford the alternatives.”

He looked around, watching the other people with different eyes.

“All those mothers, how many of them are here because they need to escape an abusive husband? All those young couples, how many of them are Omegas who try to make the best of a situation they have been forced into? When I ask myself those questions, I feel powerless with rage.”

The kids chose that moment to interrupt by excitedly asking them to come look at something. Akashi actually felt a bit thankful. How should he have reacted to something like that? He had never thought about it. He had never met a person suffering domestic abuse except for Aomine and that one did not hold back on showing others what that had led to personality-wise. In his eyes the guy was a criminal with nothing but basketball skills as a redeeming quality.

Had Ayako been abused by her husband? How had she spent time with her first daughter? Her only daughter, he corrected. An Alpha man, an Omega women and three children – none of them their own. Would that be his life? He hadn't really pondered the fact that she was sterile. Should he end this? She could not give him heirs. But wouldn't it be better than creating another child with his twisted blood? Everyone could fill his role and lead his company. He could just adopt the next heir or heiress. Really, would he have a problem with Natsue? No. No, it didn't matter if he never had children by his own blood. It might actually be best not to be born with all those expectations heaped upon you.

They settled on a blanket Ayako took from the backpack he had carried for her. As she had predicted Shinta began to fuss shortly after, so she feed him mashed vegetables she had prepared beforehand. Like most babies he was a messy eater, so she spent most of the time trying to keep the food from escaping. He watched the other two playing catch and practicing handstand, getting up after a few minutes to help them with their training.

It made both kids ravenous after some time but of course Ayako had prepared food for them as well. Akashi offered to get them drinks and both children tagged along. As the next vending machine was at the park's entrance, it took them at least a quarter of an hour. He got how one could spend an afternoon and evening in a park this way. It tired out the children, you only needed to prepare some food and it was healthy because of the sun and fresh air. It was a nice way to spend your time, just like going for a ride or playing basketball on an outside court.

When they came back, two other women were sitting on their blanket talking with Ayako. They cooed and shyly made eyes at him when he came over, excitedly chattering with Ayako – most likely about him. Omegas really were like hens flocking together. Natsue and Ryou did not look put out at all, so either they knew them or it was normal to come back to their mothers talking with people they had never seen before.

“Good evening,” he greeted the young women.

One was pregnant, the other was holding a toddler just like Ayako. Both didn't seem older than twenty at most. The pregnant one looking even younger on second thought – maybe fifteen – just giggled, the other one demurely greeted him in a low voice. Yes, young Omega women. Too young for him.

“This is Kaname and Yue. They came over when they saw me being harassed by a young man,” Ayako explained.

“Who?” He immediately checked the surroundings. Who dared to approach his woman?

"He is gone, don't worry." She took a drink from Natsue, thanking her for getting her favorite. Natsue did not look worried at all. Was it also normal to be harassed as a single woman?

"We need to help each other out." The one called Yue said and gathered up her toddler. "Well, now that your mate is back, we shall take our leave."

"I would like to thank you on my behalf as well." He turned to them and bowed. "Thank you for looking after Ayako."

The younger one giggled again, shyly hiding behind her older friend who blushed as well. They took their leave, sending him furtive glances over their shoulders and obviously talking about him after they were out of hearing reach.

"Should I be jealous?" Ayako looked at him with an amused smile. "Alphas normally only bow to Omegas they are courting. Most Alphas think others aren't worthy of their attention."

"I am not most Alphas." He sat and took his drink from Ryou who had carried it. The boy looked at him with big eyes, obviously stunned into silence.

"When I'll become an Alpha, I'll be nice as well," Natsue decided.

"I'm sure you will." He petted her head, making her smile.

Ayako shifted on the blanket, sitting next to him and lay her head on his shoulder. With a satisfied smile he looped his arm around her shoulders. She offered a sandwich from her unending food supply to him. Yeah, life was good.

He had invited his friends to a basketball match the next Saturday. He had added to some of the invitations that he planned to bring his girlfriend, knowing that would make everyone show up without a doubt. Now that everyone was living in Tokyo, meeting got a lot easier than back when he was still living in Kyoto and Murasakibara in Akita. Most answered with an affirmation, only Kuroko congratulated him on having a girlfriend now. Well, okay, Kise asked for a picture of his girlfriend but he decided to simply ignore the text. Most texts sent by Kise better went ignored.

So he got Ayako and Natsue – Ryou and Shinta were back with their mother – from their flat in sports clothes, deciding to look up the metro lines to their destination. He got a smile from Ayako for that. She had a backpack with her again which he offered to carry for her. It felt just like last time, so she most likely had packed a blanket and food again.

They arrived at the court a bit early but as always, some of his friends had been earlier. Kagami and Aomine were already having a fierce one on one while Kuroko and Momoi sat on a blanket outside the fenced court, so they would not be hit by stray basketballs. Kuroko was wearing a wide shirt which he could still wear with Tsuki under it. It seemed he was breastfeeding her right now, judging from her position under said shirt. Momoi and Shiro were playing a clapping game. They stopped when they noticed the new-comers and Momoi waived them over. She stood and took Shiro's hand to meet them halfway.

"Good morning, Akashi." She proudly smiled at him while mostly looking at Ayako.

"Good morning, Momoi. Ayako, this was our team manager, Momoi Satsuki. Momoi, this is Teppan Ayako."

"I'll be in your care. Please call me Ayako." She bowed deeply to the Alpha woman.

"Call me Satsuki then." His friend bowed as well. "And who are you, little Miss?"

"My name is Teppan Natsue. I am four years old." She bowed as well but for a lot shorter time. "Is this your son?"

"Ah, no, this is Kagami Shiro. He's my godson. The one over there is his mother and

the red-haired guy on the court is his father." She pushed the boy in front of her. "Greet them, Shiro."

The normally not very shy boy looked at the slightly older girl and squeaked. Natsue grinned at that and offered a hand to him saying: "Would you like to play with me?"

He slowly sported a grin but waited for Momoi's nod before he took her hand.

"Don't forget to stay in sight," Ayako reminded her daughter before they were off.

"Sometimes I don't know from where she gets her openness and bravery. Mitsuki was such a shy girl in comparison."

"She gets her bravery from you." Akashi shortly squeezed Ayako's hand that he was holding.

"Charmer." She shook her head at him. "She's a lot braver than I'll ever be."

"I think every one of us will tell you that being with our dear friend Akashi is showing a lot of bravery." Momoi said without any malice. "Shall I introduce the others to you?"

Ayako nodded and followed her, mostly just guiding Akashi along who was satisfied to follow her lead. Kuroko seemed to have finished breast-feeding in the meantime, patting Tsuki for her burp. He stood to greet them, sharing something like a secret smile with Ayako. Of course both immediately sat next to each other and began to chat about Tsuki. Ayako told him about how Akashi had shown her the picture and what a beautiful baby Tsuki was.

He internally nodded along. For a person knowing that her boyfriend had been in love with the one she was sitting next to, she was surprisingly open and friendly. Somehow he had expected her to be wary. Momoi watched the two men on the court and blew her whistle after Aomine secured a basket.

"Boys! Come and greet Ayako," she ordered them and both immediately went over. She still had them well-trained it seemed.

Ayako seemed to have not spared them a look before, even though both Alphas reeked with sweat. Now she was watching them like a mesmerized rabbit. Akashi held back from clicking his tongue in disapproval. Okay, both were taller and broader than him but it wasn't like he looked bad. He could still beat both as long as they weren't in the zone.

"Ayako, this is my fiancée Aomine Daiki and this other tall fellow is Kagami Taiga, Tetsu's husband. Boys, this is Teppan Ayako, Akashi's girlfriend. Her daughter Natsue is running around with Shiro over there."

"Oh?" Kagami looked for his son before nodding in approval. "It's good to have more friends his age. Nice to meet ya, Miss Teppan."

"Please call me Ayako." She bowed to both of them. Like she had said before, none of them bowed back. Akashi glared at them which made at least Aomine bow and greet her properly.

"It seems I have some manners to teach." Akashi decided and stood.

Aomine went to open the court's door for him and surrendered the basketball without another word. At least one of them knew their place. He saw the boy flinch while Akashi surrendered his place to his alter ego.

"Akashi?" Kuroko stood right in front of him. "Thank you for coming back. I think Taiga learned his lesson."

Said man was lying on his back, taking deep breaths, looking completely drained. Akashi's body felt pleasantly numb. He asked: "How long has it been?"

"About half an hour in the zone for both of you. It really is enough now. You are giving

Aomine an unfair advantage.”

He simply nodded and returned to the spread blankets, handing Aomine the ball on the way. Everyone checked his eyes when he walked by. All Alphas except for Momoi were a bit wary of him. Those now counted Kise, Kasamatsu and Shintaro. Kazunari checked his eyes as well but mostly seemed in good spirits – actually he was always in good spirits, so no surprise there. Natsue was still playing with Shiro, now joined by Kikyo who might have given her a challenge but she was dressed in a yukata. Shintaro was wearing one as well, he would not play while being pregnant of course. Murasakibara and his mate were running late as always. He sat next to Ayako on the blanket who still looked at him with disturbing interest.

“Is something the matter?” Had she noticed his different eye color on the court?

“Tetsu told me that you have two different personalities. I was curious about that. Is it true that your eyes can change color?” She asked in naive interest.

Wait, what?