

Wounds

A perpetrator's perspective

Von Gepo

Kapitel 9: The wisdom of a child

Aomine enjoyed her chatter all through lunch, occasionally giving a comment or question, just like he did with Satsuki. In the end, all women seemed to be the same, no matter how old. They seemed to love their own voices, prattling on and on about some nonsense or other. Instead of annoying, it was kind of soothing. Except for a greeting, he did not have to talk with Midorima's parents. His mother seemed nice but his father gave off a strange aura that made Aomine cautious. Older Alpha men were not his thing, even sober.

Kikyō was a delight though. He hadn't even realized how much he missed talking to a small child until now. Since his brother's death, there had been no children at all. While it made him realize what he missed out on by killing Aoki, it also made him happy to interact with her. She was easy. She liked having an adult to command around, he liked to oblige. Maybe he should ask Satsuki to go all domina on him, she might like the experience.

"So Kamen Raider was like boom and he went bang. The robber was flying and flying. Justice was victorious!" She held up her arms.

"It always is." He tickled the skin under her arm which made her squeal with laughter.

"Bad guys get punished."

"Yay, no bad guys!" She grinned up at him which made his stomach drop a bit. She was so innocent and naive. Still thought that life was fair, that everyone got saved, that bad people got arrested. "Papa is learning to save people, you know?"

"Your papa is very good at saving people." He did not dare look up. He could feel Midorima's gaze boring into him. "He will be a good doctor."

"Like Kamen Raider!"

"But Kamen Raider is a hero, not a doctor."

"Really?" She scrunched her eyes. "Then what does a doctor do?"

"Uh ... they help people that are sick or injured." Or bleeding out after losing their child. Was he the reason Midorima had decided on becoming a doctor? "Actually, what kind of doctor do you wanna be, Midorima?"

"Gynaecologist" The man answered.

"Eww ... kay." Aomine shuddered. "So your father will help people have healthy babies."

"Can we have a new baby then?" She asked her father with obvious delight.

"Eh?" A faint blush spread on the green-haired's cheeks before he glanced at his boyfriend/mate/husband, whatever they were exactly.

"We'll have another baby if the gods bless us with another baby. It's why we go to temples and pray" Kazu explained his daughter. It was strange saying his first name but as they were both called Midorima now – and Aomine would never use Midorima's first name – he had become Kazu to him.

"I miss Shiro." She laid down her chopsticks on her barely touched food. "I want a baby brother."

"I am sure Kuroko and Shiro will visit soon." Kazu ruffled her head. "Now eat up or you won't grow strong enough to hold a little brother."

"Kay." She immediately took her chopsticks again – Aomine was still amazed she could handle them – and began eating.

"Did the two have play-dates?" He asked Kazu who was a lot easier to talk to than Midorima.

"Yes, Kuroko often came over. We sometimes babysat when he went out on a date." The Beta watched his reaction. "Have you ever met Shiro?"

"Only at larger gatherings where he stayed on Kagami's arm. Tetsu wouldn't trust me around his kid." He saw Midorima opening his mouth for a cutting remark. "It's better that way."

"I think that's a shame." Kazu completely overrun his mate with that. "You are good with kids. Where did you learn that?"

Urgh. He glanced down at Kikyō who seemed oblivious to the tension, happily eating. He tried his best not to choke on his words when he said: "My brother."

"I remember you saying you would be horrible with children." Despite Midorima's not so subtle signaling for Kazu to stop, he continued the conversation. "Kikyō seems to enjoy your company."

"She's a nice girl." He looked away and concentrated on his breathing. He had made too many mistakes in his life by lashing out in anger after bottling things up. Now wasn't the time to explode. "It's easy to like her."

"She's easy to like because she knows she is loved. And she has great genes too." Kazu winked at his mate. "You seem able to love children."

"I do." It was true, he did. Kikyō reminded him that he liked kids. He had really loved his brother, no matter how annoying he was at times. "I just fail at the genes part. My family is full of-" He glanced at Kikyō. "Er, unpleasant people with anger issues."

"And you think that is genetic?" Kazu raised an eyebrow.

"At least it is a recognizable trait all of us have." He smirked at a sudden memory that came up. "My brother could bring down the roof on us with his screaming." At least until his parents hit him into oblivion.

"So you don't think that having anger issues is something you can change about yourself?"

"Huh?" Well ... yes? Wait, no. He wanted to change. He wanted to be able to live his life without emotional explosions that made him dangerous. So his anger issues had to be treatable. They couldn't be genetic or at least, even if they were, they needed to be changeable. "Well, no, it must be something ... it should be able to get changed."

"So one day we might see you with a child by your side? Because you are a much more likable human being next to a child." Kazu smiled mischievously.

"Uhm ... I am not sure that is a compliment." He remembered his therapy. In the right context, this was most likely a compliment. Why did it annoy him right now? Because he did not have children and would not have them in the near future. "I thought people had children to care for, not get them to care for them. That sounds like the

wrong order.”

“It is good to hear that you know that.” Midorima glared at his mate. “I would advise against you raising a child.”

Asshole. Aomine looked up and said: “Well, I guess it depends on who you raise them with. It’s amazing how one good parent can make child-rearing successful, even if the other is a disaster as a parent.”

That glare turned on him, about a hundred times more venomous.

“Mo~! Do you always have to be at each other’s throat?” Satsuki rolled her eyes. “Really now, this is ridiculous.”

“And you are always starting it” Kazu told his mate. “Though I have to admit that your comments never make it any better.” With that he looked at Aomine.

“I did not flip out” He drawled while leaning back. “He makes me work on my anger issues and my answers get less aggressive every time, don’t they?”

Kazu blinked in surprise before he had to admit: “That’s true.”

So he turned to Midorima with a self-satisfied smirk. Beat that, bastard. Sadly he did. The green-haired sighed and said: “I am sorry for antagonizing you.”

“Well ... okay.” It was his turn, huh? Damn it. “Sorry for insulting you.”

“Don’t be sad” Kikyo said and laid a hand on his arm. “Mommy always makes me apologize too.”

Aomine scratched his head, a mixture of a smirk and exasperation on his face as he said: “I guess I should know better by now. I am as old as your father.”

“Age is no excuse!” She said loudly. “It’s what Mommy always says.”

“You have a good mommy” He had to admit. It was true, Kazu was pretty cool as a parent. Most likely he had learned some kind of inner peace after three years of living with Midorima. Whatever the hell he got out of that except for this cute bundle.

“The best!” She nodded vigorously.

“I wish you luck in getting that baby brother. I’ll help with the prayers.” He promised her.

“Yay!” She turned around. “Mommy, can Mine and I go play?”

Kazu really had to control his facial muscles to not burst out in laughter at the nickname. After hiding his smile behind his hand and trying his best to look like he was thinking about it, he told her: “If he wants to continue playing, you may. Have you asked him?”

She simply looked over her shoulder, turning back to her mother with a pleased smile after seeing Aomine nod his consent without having to ask.

“Do not spoil her so much, it was her job to ask.” Kazu warned him but waved them off.

He had the sudden urge to nicely say “Thank you, Mommy” but he was able to curb the impulse. The guy was as old as him, no matter how motherly he acted. But he did give off that nice feeling of home and peace.

He wasn’t here for Midorima, that guy could really just vanish in his opinion. But Kikyo and Kazu were nice people. He liked that feeling of family. And damn, he knew his bad opinion of his former teammate had a lot to do with jealousy. He had that much self-reflection. Antagonizing him was a bad idea because he was the one allowing him to come over or not.

Though shit when he was the only one of his friends around with a child. Maybe he should sign himself up as a helper with the local orphanage or something. Being around children was good for him, he knew that. After Hiro’s death he just hadn’t been able to look at a child without remembering. Especially after Aoki ... well, it was

time to get back on track.

He saw Momoi and Kazu sitting on the veranda, watching them play. He called over: "Hey, Satsuki! Are you up for another stop today?"

"Sure, where?" He called back with a smile.

Another graveyard. Not something for Kikyo to hear. So he said: "I'll tell you later."

First he had to finish a round of tea with a bunny, a panda and a doll.

"So, do we have every graveyard that is important for you? Or are there more?" Satsuki asked at dinner.

"Nah, that's all. No more deaths on my account." He slurped his ramen.

"You weren't guilty of your brother's death" She chided him.

"Was too." He looked her straight in the eyes. "I could have gotten him out before they killed him. I just didn't do it because I was too afraid what they would do to me then. It never occurred to me I could get myself out as well."

"You were thirteen" She tried to argue.

"That was one year before I would have been a father myself." No, that wasn't exactly an argument. "In both cases, I should have been more of an adult. Come on, today a three-year-old lectured me on proper behavior because I behaved like a kid. Behaving impulsively, running away from responsibility, I've been doing that shit for years."

"Well ... yes. But taking responsibility for your own life and that of others are two different things. You said so today yourself. You are not adult enough to care for a child. Why do you expect your younger self to be that?"

"Being a parent and telling on people that are killing a child are two different things, no matter if those people are your parents. It would have been the right thing to do."

"Then shall I start blaming myself?" Her eyes shone with tears. "You told me what they did. I never came up with the idea of going to the police either. So is your brother's death on my conscience too? They weren't even my parents. I would not have suffered punishment or even death. By your definition, that makes me even guiltier than you are."

"No!" His eyes were wide. "You didn't really know, I ... never told you all." He hung his head. "Gods, I never told anyone."

"By your logic, even heavier than your brother's death would be my responsibility not to have gone to the police on your behalf. No matter how often you told me not to because you were afraid, it would have been the right thing to get you out of there." She averted her gaze, longingly looking at the window as if she could fly away. "So am I guilty for what happened to you too?" She searched his face for an answer. "How about blaming those that actually hurt you both?"

After a moment of watching the glistening of her tears that had not fallen yet, he slowly nodded. She was right. He would never, ever blame her for what happened to him or his brother. She had been as much a child as he had been. If he gave her the right to be insecure and afraid, maybe he should grant himself the same right.

But with Aoki, he was clearly to blame. He was the one who had killed his child. There was simply no excuse. All that pain, guilt and self-hate had broken out of him and been unleashed on the two most helpless beings that had been in his life: Kuroko and Aoki. He had killed one and nearly killed the other.

"Will you tell me about Aoki?" Satsuki asked very quietly.

He shook his head.