

# Comfort

## Twin-story to "Hurt"

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### Kapitel 16: A fresh start

The next morning, the world looked fresh and new. Kuroko wriggled out of his mate's embrace, greeting the spring morning with a smile. He had an urge to call Aomine and make up with him but actually there was nothing to make up for. Aomine had already said he was sorry and that he expected Kuroko's anger one day. Maybe he should call to say he had been angry. But really, he was alright, Aomine was not. Maybe he should linger in that state of mind for a bit.

Kuroko made breakfast and woke up his sleepy mate with a cup of coffee. Kagami followed him to the living room to sit down for fish and rice, only waking up after eating about three portions. They had settled into an easy routine soon enough. Kuroko cooked breakfast, Kagami dinner. Kagami used the leftovers to prepare their bentos for the next day, more often than not cooking more food because apparently he ate even more since Kuroko moved in. He had necked his mate that co-pregnancy was not appreciated. The only thing that had not worked until now was studying because whenever they were alone, Kagami would drag him off to bed.

Not that he resented that in any way. But he had promised his mate's mother to get her son to study, so he used the basketball practice to come up with a schedule. Finals were in two weeks, so they were short on time. The others eyed him from time to time, their gaze sometimes falling to his stomach which was of course completely flat. But knowing that and actually refraining from looking seemed difficult. Kuroko understood. He looked often enough himself. Nine months. Damn, he could not wait. It was the opposite from Midorima who seemed a bit overwhelmed and scared, not that he would ever admit that. But finding out you were five months pregnant and would have a cesarian in two was a bit fast, true. Especially when you never expected to be pregnant.

Somehow his thoughts returned to Aomine over the course of the week. He wanted to tell him about his pregnancy, his happiness with Kagami, his burst of anger and the relief that followed. But wouldn't he only burden the other? By now that wish to see Aomine suffer had completely vanished. Was it a bad idea to call him? Or good? Really, he didn't know. Could he ask Kagami? Gods, he wished this was easier. How did you go on as friends after something like that had happened? Did he even want to be friends with Aomine?

Yes. Yes, he wanted them to be friends. He wanted the old Aomine back, not the one he loved but the one who smiled when he played, who forget his worries when he played. He didn't know how but damn, he cared. Was it wrong to care about someone

who nearly destroyed you? Would Kagami understand? Or should he just not tell him?

"You are unnaturally silent" Kagami noted on their way home.

"I was thinking."

"Well, spill it. What is going on?" The other took his hand into his own, warming it in the chill spring air.

"I fear you might get angry." Kuroko looked up. "It's about Aomine."

"Somehow I knew it was too easy when you said yes to never inviting him anymore."

Kagami sighed. "You can't stay angry with anyone, can you?"

"No, it is not healthy. He made a lot of mistakes, he apologized. He don't think he will ever do something like that again. Even after all, he is my friend. I don't want to throw him out of my life." Kuroko gazed at his mate imploringly. "I know it does not make sense to you but I like him. Just as a friend. Buried behind that arrogant, spiteful wall is a very nice person. I don't want to accept I'll never see that person again."

Kagami's hand squeezed his forcefully, trembling, before his mate sighed in defeat and looked at him with a face full of agony and sorrow, whispering: "I don't want to lose you to him."

"Silly." The shorter one stopped to turn the other's face back to him after Kagami had averted his eyes. "You know as well as I that Omegas mate for life. There is only you, there will never be anyone else. I am pregnant with your child. In how many more ways can I belong to you?"

"What if he hurts you?" Kagami voiced his next doubt.

"Then I can decide again if trying to get Aomine back as a friend is worth it."

"It's just ..." The other seemed to collect his thoughts. "You are so bend on mending your relationship with Aomine. What about Akashi for example? Or Murasakibara? I see why you don't have strong ties with Kise, that one is horribly superficial but what makes Aomine this special when you talk about friendship? Are you sure you are not confusing love with friendship?"

"Yes, I am." Kuroko laid a hand on his mate's perfect abs, enjoying their feel. "I don't like Murasakibara much, he's very unreliable. You are right about Akashi, I think I should talk with him as well. But Aomine was my best friend for a year and I miss that friend. I won't think about anything strange as long as I have my fairytale prince at home." He smirked at his mate.

Kagami blushed and mumbled something Kuroko did not quite catch. His mate looked up after a moment and bend down to pick Kuroko up in the middle of the street. It was his time to blush but he calmed when the other whispered into his ear: "I want to be that fairytale prince. I don't want to ever feel like a substitute for the one you could not have."

"You don't have to" Kuroko promised. He knew he meant that. Just how could he get that across? "I love you, Kagami."

"Taiga" His mate replied.

"I love you, Taiga." He smiled. "And you may come up with whatever endearment you want."

"I'll stick with Tetsu for a start. I always hated how he got to call you that and I did not." Really? That had bothered him? Silly Kagami. But yes, he had hated that Himuro got to call him Taiga and he did not.

"Don't worry, you are allowed so much more."

Kagami finally relaxed again.

He had invited Aomine to burgers and vanilla shakes. The weather was getting better,

so he changed from drinking hot chocolate back to his beloved vanilla shakes. Best thing was: Kagami had learned how to make really good vanilla shakes at home. So he found his friend sitting in front of a pile of burgers, just like Kagami always did. He greeted him with a grin and a wave, saying: "Hey, Tetsu!"

"Long time no see, Aomine." Kuroko nodded and sat down with his vanilla shake.

"Want a burger?" The other offered.

"Yes, why not." He had not begun feeling nauseous, so he should eat as much as he could.

"You still eat like a small bird. I don't guess you'll grow more, won't you?"

"I fear not. You'll all tower over me forever." Kuroko smiled. "Being small makes picking up children easier."

"Those will outgrow you too, you know. I mean, how much can you even carry? My brother had a weight of ten kilo by the time he was one year old. Babies grow awfully fast." Aomine bit into a burger, seemingly not bothered by the topic.

"Pregnancy still takes nine months." He lay a hand on his stomach.

"Why am I not surprised?" The other sighed. "Did your mate really let you meet me in such a state? I'd have expected him to be more protective of you. He is aware of what I did, isn't he?"

"Yes, I told him. I also cautioned him not to hurt or threaten you, I don't appreciate such behavior."

"That is normal Alpha behavior." Aomine shrugged. "I mean, I'm thankful he's not out to kill me but you know that you are really testing his stress tolerance with this, don't you?"

"I don't appreciate it if others think they can make decisions for me. Who I am friends with is my own business." Kuroko felt a surge of annoyance. Why did they all think they were entitled to tell him what to do or not?

"Friends?" Aomine put down his burger and looked at him for a moment. "You really think we can be friends after all of this?"

"Why not?" Kuroko tilted his head. "Don't you want to be friends?"

"I ... of course I want to be friends. Damn, Tetsu, you were my best friend. But ... I did so many horrible things to you, you can't really want to forgive me, can you?" There was unnerving disbelief on the other's face.

"Do I have to forgive you to be your friend?" Kuroko drank a bit of his vanilla shake. "I understand why it all happened, why you lost yourself. If you ever try to hurt me again, this is over. But I don't have enough anger to hate you."

"You have a complicated mind." Aomine sunk back in his seat. "I never know what you are thinking. Sometimes it seems like you want to forgive me, sometimes you seem angry, then full of sorrow. I lashed out at you in anger so often, are you not afraid I'll do it again? Because I am afraid of that."

"If you do, Kagami will return it tenfold." He was sure about that at least.

"What did he say about you hanging out with me?"

"He said he doesn't ever want to feel like your replacement. His biggest concern is that I fall in love with you." - Aomine scoffed - "Yes, I find that highly unlikely as well. His next concern was that you would hurt me."

"And you don't think that is a legit concern?" The other bit back into his burger but did not seem to have the same appetite as before.

"No. You can refrain from physically hurting Momoi, so I'll expect the same respect from you from now on. I don't plan on protecting you from the repercussions if you do hurt me anyway." He took a pause to let those words sink in. "I won't excuse your

actions from now on. You are responsible for how you behave."

Aomine slowly chewed and finally swallowed. He did the same with the last part of his burger before he nodded and said: "Fair enough. But really, I should take responsibility for my actions up to now ... is there any way to make it up to ya?"

Making it up. No. There was no way. He did not plan on forgiving Aomine. Ever. There was no way for making up for killing a baby. So he shook his head.

Aomine heaved a sigh and said: "'Kay, no making it up. You do really plan on letting this hang over me forever. Fair enough. It will anyway. You are right, I can never make that up. Right ... so, how far along are you?"

"A week." He smiled, unable to keep the sombre mood.

"That's early." The other took a new burger from his pile. "How did Kagami take it? Did you plan it?"

"No, it was an accident. He took it well though. He called his parents to inform them and helped me tell my mother." He also took up his vanilla shake again. He liked the sweet creamy consistency. He had already begun stocking their flat with fruit juice and hid some flavors Kagami liked to use when he cooked.

"I'd have already failed at that point." Aomine stated that as a fact, not as a depressing thought. "He is a much better man than I am. So he even met your mother? I bet she liked him."

"Yes, she did. But I already introduced them beforehand. I learned from the last time and asked her to give me her opinion of him."

"An extremely reliable idiot" The other offered.

"She did not say idiot but yes, that was her opinion as well. But only I get to call him that." He did not need Aomine's approval but it was still nice to hear.

"Yeah, whatever. I do know what is good for you and that's not me. It makes me damn jealous but I'm glad to see you happy." The Alpha admitted. "When Kagami told me you were his mate, I was afraid for my life but really happy for you."

"He asked for my approval to beat you up more than once."

"Pussy." Aomine snorted. "I'm not a masochist but he should listen to his instincts."

"He is not as barbarian as you. I would not sit here if I obeyed him like a good little Omega." Kuroko's eyelids drew together to form a sharp line.

"Yeah, I know, just ... my instincts tell me to protect you from harm, even if you are not my mate. They'll get stronger the longer you are pregnant. I really should have followed mine back then. I hate the fact that I was- no, am such a coward."

"Who or what are you afraid of?" Kuroko tilted his head.

Aomine looked highly uncomfortable at the question but slowly answered after a bit anyway: "My father for once. Whatever Kagami would do for me killing your baby is nothing against what my father would do for getting you pregnant. If you think I am a barbarian, be glad you never met him. He is a monster. I am still unable to hit back, even if I throw a pretty good punch by now. I knocked out Hayazaki with one hit."

"Momo told me. She was worried."

"Yeah, she does worry a lot." Aomine ate a bit more of his burger. "You know why it is easy not to hit her? She hits back. And damn, she can throw a punch, I tell you. Even Kise cowers when I get serious but she never does. I know that shouldn't be the reason why I don't hit her but it is. So I guess you really don't have to worry, I would not want to go against Kagami. Your mate is insanely powerful, even if his basketball is weak." He smirked.

"Is not." Kuroko understood it was a joke though. "Are you and Kise still an item?"

"Well ... no. Not exactly." The other scratched his cheek. "His team's captain walked in

on us and nearly took his head off for fraternizing with the enemy or something. He's only a Beta but Kise had the gall to tell me we would not do it again and went with him. I can't believe he did that. I texted him to ask if he was with that shrimp now but he texted back they were only teammates. Do you understand that?"

"Kise has idolized but never loved you." Kuroko smiled, thinking about the quirky blonde. "He's become a bit more serious last year. So he knows that real friends are better than casual sex. Kasamatsu is his friend, thereby he is more important than you."

Aomine made an annoyed noise and stuffed himself with another burger. After half a minute he mumbled: "Finding real friends is hard."

"That's why I did not want to cut you off." Kuroko stole a burger from the other. "You were my best friend before this mess happened."

"I fear you are my only friend next to Momoi." A small smile flitted over Aomine's features. "It's good to talk to you again."

"Same here." Kuroko leaned forward. "So what happened while I wasn't talking to you?"

Kagami opened the door before he was able to find the right key. He smiled when he saw his mate smile and embraced him before Kuroko could take off his shoes.

"So you made up?" The redhead asked.

"Yeah, we are talking again. We're friends. If he ever hurts me, he knows you'll come after him for that." Kuroko kissed the cheek next to his lips. "He was okay with that."

"I don't really care if he is okay with that or not" Kagami offered, straightening a bit to look at Kuroko. "If anyone hurts you, I'll hurt them back."

"Please run your plans by me beforehand. But when it comes to Aomine, it's okay. Just don't kill him, please." He bit his lip. "I have a question ... I know you don't like dogs much but can Nigou come live with us? I hate the fact that he has to live outside. A few of our teammates smuggled him into their home when it got really cold but that is not a good life for a dog. This apartment complex does allow pets, does it not?"

"Well, yeah." Kagami stepped back and allowed Kuroko enough space to take off his shoes. "You know that a dog is a lot of responsibility? I know you already feed him but you would also need to walk him and groom him and-" He looked at his mate in exasperation. "Oh well, yeah, it's okay. But only him. No other pets, you hear me? You are not picking up any more strays."

"I don't plan on doing so." The shorter one smiled. "Nigou's eyes really look like mine. When I found him, I had to think of my dead child. I could not let him starve there. Now that I can finally accept all that happened, I want that dog with me."

"The dog reminds you of your dead child?" Kagami raised his eyebrows. "That's a heavy burden for such a small animal."

"Yes, I need to learn to love it as a dog now. Aoki is buried." He had a sudden urge to embrace his mate, so he did. "Sorry that I am so difficult sometimes."

"Yeah, it's okay. I decided to stop overthinking again. You are my mate, you love me, you tell me if you need anything or if I make a mistake, right? 'Cause I don't want to keep thinking about if you are unhappy or want to leave me or rather have Aomine or whatnot." Kagami laid his chin on Kuroko's hair. "It makes my head hurt, you know?"

"I promise to tell you." A big smile plastered his face. "You are my mate, the only one I'll ever have, so stop fretting. It's not like you."

"Well, I may be your only mate but there is the dog and our child and your brand new old friend and the team and your mother and-"

"Shut up, Kagami." He raised himself on his toes and kissed the other. "You are an idiot sometimes. How about you start dinner?"