

K Powerless

Von Alma

Kapitel 4: Burn Marks

The door fell softly into its lock and clacked as the mechanism locked again. For a long moment, he just leaned against the wood and held his breath. He was terribly tense; every muscle in him longed and screamed after a hot bath and a relaxing massage. As for the pain on his throat- well he didn't want to think about it. It still stung terribly with every single movement he made. Wordlessly, and mindlessly, he looked down the hallway of his apartment. It was dark, but he wasn't in the mood to turn on the lights. The gentle moonlight, which penetrated through his window into the adjoining room, was enough for him. Slowly, painfully, he forced himself out of his boots and stored them on the threshold of his door with too much care, followed by the jacket of his uniform. He just hung it on the wardrobe beside him. Briefly, he wondered whether to strip his uniform altogether, but that seemed like an unnecessary effort. So he left it at that, grabbed the small plastic bag he had brought with him and strolled into the kitchen with big, tired steps.

Actually, he wasn't even hungry. His appetite had been gone for days now. But along with lack of sleep, this was a dangerous combination. Therefore, he forced himself to take the food out of the bag, grab two sticks out of the drawer and eat. Normally, he hated such a hasty, uncultivated way of dining; eating right out of a take-away box like an animal. But what was the point now in creating a pleasant atmosphere? What difference did it make when he was eating alone? Either way, it seemed pathetic.

Arduously, Reisi chewed on the badly fried tofu, which had become entirely oily and bloated in the stale teriyaki sauce. It seemed like hours until he finally managed to swallow the first bite. He did so only out of obligation, but even the food wouldn't make him feel better in any way. Especially not today. The thought alone made his body tense uncomfortably again. He resisted the urge to scratch the burn marks on his neck. Instead, he chose to swallow his food down in pain. It would have been better if he wasted no more thoughts on it, but he was far from that.

Since the meeting with the Silver King, he felt even more nervous and tense than before. He had been completely defenseless. Threatening him had been out of the question. He had nothing to use against him. He had nothing to refrain him from telling anyone about what had happened on this day exactly one week ago. And if he really did reveal his secret... A suffocating lump grew in Reisi's throat, forcing his eyes to shut in pain. He was really afraid of the consequences. His integrity, his status and his reputation now depended solely on the decency of a king. If he wanted, Weismann

could betray him easily; he just had to say a few words. That was the last thing Reisi needed. He still had a few scores to settle and to straighten things out. And he was only able to do that as Captain of Scepter 4, as the head of the Blue clan.

Disgusted, he looked into the nearly untouched food-box and decided that a few bites probably were enough to keep his head above the water. Without further ado, he packed it all back together and put it in his refrigerator. A brief pain slipped through his shoulder when he heard the muffled sound of the closing door. Only for a moment, he tried earnestly to massage the stress away, but as soon as he had begun, he quickly gave up again. It didn't make sense anyway. And as long as he hadn't accomplished what he was aiming for, he couldn't relax. Dejected, he closed his eyes and remained in the darkness of his apartment, took a deep breath and tried to relax at least a little.

He heard his kitchen clock ticking, and its harmonious, calm rhythm sounded almost like his heartbeat, which was pounding through his neck. It also reminded him of how late it was. Much too late. But he didn't mind working overtime - he preferred his office rather than being here, in this lonely, silent apartment, which seemed to stare at him with its reproachful eyes. He always felt watched here, monitored, strange and powerless. This was not his home. But where was it instead? Was it in the headquarters; in his big, comfortable chair? With his clan? The very same people who didn't even want to come to their New Year's Eve party?

Resigning, he lowered his eyelids, and took a deep breath. No, he had no home and no family and friends as the other clans had. He served the safety of the city's citizens. And nothing else should have been important to him. Duty and responsibility were his family.

Suddenly, an aggressive ringing from his door tore him from his thoughts and made him wince. For a moment, he could feel his excited heartbeat pounding wildly against his neck, making him terribly dizzy. A quick shake of the head helped him to regain his composure. Suspicious, he stayed where he was and waited breathlessly for another ring. And it came, even longer and shriller than the previous one. Only a few people knew where he lived and his subordinates would reach him on his cell phone if something had happened. The person, who was so impatiently abusing his bell, could only be one man. It demanded a lot of strength by Munakata to get moving and walk towards the door.

A third, angered ringing accompanied the opening of the door and worsened his headache. When the door was fully open and left him completely unprotected to the fury of his counterpart, his breath stopped for a second. But Reisi's face was unimpressed and cold as always, a perfect businesslike expression as it was appropriate to his status. Suoh, in contrast, looked like a frantic animal. His face was contorted with rage and anger, his brows pinched together, his lips curled and his fists clenched. A violent gasp rattled through his body and made him seem more dangerous than he actually was. The sight drove a bolt of pain through Munakata's body, but on the outside he was completely unfazed and indifferent. He did not even attempt to greet Suoh, he knew that the red-haired man would take care of that.

Suoh's loud, menacing voice thundered at him, lashing out at him mercilessly. "You shitty bastard! Just who do you think you are?!"

"Hello, Suoh," Was all Munakata replied, "What brings you to me in the middle of the night?"

"Do not play dumb with me! You know exactly why I'm here! What the hell, huh? Are you fucking kidding me?"

The man with the black hair closed his eyes and pushed his glasses back up with his fingers. "I don't know what you're talking about."

This fueled Suoh's anger even more. His fist began to tremble. "Mu-na-ka-ta..."

Yet, Munakata's eyes remained closed as he made a repelling gesture. "Everything I do is following and executing laws. Unlike you, Suoh. Homra has made itself guilty to a number of criminal offences and now you must take responsibility. I'm only doing my job. Really, you should thank me that you are still able to roam free."

"Thanking... you?!" The red-haired man seemed about to lose control, but Munakata interrupted him immediately.

"Yes, thanking me. What do you think who paid the expenses for your hospital visit? It was paid through taxpayers' money. Did you really think after the stunt you pulled on the Ashinaka High School grounds, the world would just go on as before? You have caused huge damages - both in my headquarters and on the school grounds. A few hundreds of innocent students were injured and traumatized. Do you think, I could let you go through with that?"

"Tsk" angrily Suoh struck through the air once. "Do not talk to me like that! I'm not one of your subordinates! And what's this shit about the hospital anyway, huh? Did I ask to be taken there?! No!"

"Maybe you didn't, but your friends did." Now he looked at him again, and his violet eyes showed no emotions at all. "Why are you so angry, anyway? Everything has turned out like you wanted. Isn't that so? You are no longer a king, and you can live your life carefree together with your friends. Isn't that what you've always wanted?"

The red-haired man tensed tremendously, and drew himself up to his full height. Munakata could see how furiously he was gasping for air and how close he was to losing control. "*Come again?!*"

"Isn't that so?" Munakata was not deterred or taken aback in any way. Instead, he folded his arms and looked him straight in the eye. "...You are now absolutely powerless, Suoh. You are no longer a king. But you have friends, a family who are by your side. And you are their leader. So take on some responsibility and adhere to the law if you don't want to see them in jail." For a moment the man stalled and he cleared his throat before he spoke again. "Besides... your life is now my responsibility,

Suoh. As someone who was in conjunction with the Dresden Slates, you're under the aegis of Scepter 4. It is my job to monitor your health and safety."

A long, tense moment Suoh just stared at him, his body trembling with rage, his eyes dark with poison. He didn't dare to abide his eyes, for a moment didn't even dare to breathe. The growl coming from the bottom of his throat echoed throughout the corridor. "You're enjoying this, aren't you? ...You're enjoying that you're the one who kept his powers while I'm the one who lost it. You're enjoying this... to have such control over me. ...That you have the upper hand now... and that I have no other choice than to obey you..."

That seemed to strike Munakata. And for a second he couldn't hide a painful twitch. It seemed as if he wanted to avert his eyes, but he forced himself to stare at him instead. "I'm doing my job, nothing else."

"Sure thing." Suoh spat ironically, but hurt as well. "And yet you do not even have the balls to say these things to my face. You sent one of your minions instead. Now you're probably too high-ranked to talk face to face with me, huh?"

"...You destroyed our headquarters. If anything, it's all your fault I have more work than usual."

Disgusted, the redhead bared his teeth and narrowed his eyes even more. "You have no right to decide on my life. And I most certainly will not dance to your tune."

"...Then you leave me no choice but to arrest you."

That sparked Suoh's unbridled anger anew and his quivering voice echoed loudly through the corridor. "I'm sure you were just waiting for that, huh?"

"Yes." Replied Munakata with a hard and unyielding voice. His eyes drilled into his and for the first time Suoh could see that he meant it. "Even if you feel humiliated by it. With you behind bars, I could at least make sure that you're safe and get proper medical care. Rather than having you run off from the hospital as stubborn as you always are even if it may lead to a deterioration of your condition. You'd probably even deliberately start a fight on the streets just because you feel like it! You're not thinking at all about those who are worried about you! No one matters to you! All you care about is that you get your way!"

A long, tense silence slid between the strained breathing of the two men. A low rumble sounded from one of the doors in the hallway and made Munakata's ears prick. Most certainly Suoh had awakened the whole hallway with his yelling and the Blue King knew too well that his neighbor just loved to eavesdrop private conversations. Suppressing his anger, he continued to stare at his old friend and tried to regain his composure. It was much harder than before.

Mikoto still looked angry, but his attitude was much calmer now, much more

collected. He stared directly into the violet eyes before him and held his breath. "Why are you avoiding me?"

"I am not." His counterpart hissed much too indignantly.

"Yes, you are. And I want to know why."

"I have a job and responsibilities."

"... And you're talking a lot of crap." Suoh growled, growing impatient.

"Is that all you wanted?"

Suoh's lips pressed harder against each other as he looked at his opponent. He was still pretty mad, but he couldn't help but notice the strange gleam in this violet eyes that put him off balance. Just like with their last fight. He wasn't just imagining things, was he? There was something in those eyes, something that shouldn't have been there. And he just had to be sure. He needed the certainty.

"Reisi..."

It was hard to overlook how the black-haired man winced at this word. Just a little, but it was enough. His mouth curved downward and his fist clenched, but Mikoto wasn't intimidated. His voice was much calmer now.

"...We really need to talk."

For the first time now Mikoto thought he could see anger in Reisi's eyes. As stiff as a poker he stood there, trying to subdue him with nothing but his penetrating gaze. He seemed to struggle violently with himself, perhaps seeking for another insult. For just a moment, Suoh believed his counterpart would simply slam the door in his face. Eventually, however, the black-haired man closed his eyes, defeated, and took a step backwards. He wasn't able to look at him, as he showed him inside with a simple and silent movement of his hand.

Without a word and an averted gaze as well, Mikoto accepted the invitation and squeezed past the black-haired man through the narrow door space. Only a few steps, however, he managed to walk into the corridor before he stopped again. Trying to gather his thoughts and clear his head, he stared through the darkness of the hallway. He was still angry, but now more with himself. He was ashamed that he'd been freaked out like that. That wasn't him. That wasn't who he was.

Briefly, he glanced down at his burned hands and clenched them into fists. He hated that. Since he had lost his powers, he was not himself anymore. He no longer had control over himself. Suddenly, there were so many emotions he couldn't control. There were so many things that seemed to bury him under their weight. He felt exposed, defenseless against all the things boiling up from inside; all these emotions

he had been suppressing for so long. He shivered as the scent of Reisi's apartment crashed against him, filling his lungs like poison. All of the sudden, he felt terribly helpless.

Behind him, he heard the door shut, taking the last shred of brightness away. He felt Reisi behind him, as if he was lurking in the darkness that surrounded them. He was looking at him, he could feel it down to his bones. And the thought made Mikoto shiver. It was just like in the past, except that they had completely changed roles. Back then, Reisi had been the one freaking out over every little thing, screaming at him when they had fought. And he had been the one who stayed calm and quiet. The one who had endured Reisi's moods and the anger he had let out on him. He had simply accepted it, never honestly trying to fight back. Mikoto had always been the type who avoided serious arguments. He just wanted his peace and quiet. But Reisi had always been the one destroying that.

Funny how things sometimes changed...

The sound of footsteps approached and made him stagger for a moment. He could sense how he drew closer. And every step made him feel more helpless. Suddenly, it was horribly cold again. Just like in his dream, when he plunged from the sky of flames into the freezing cold sea of darkness. He was so cold. He felt so defenseless, powerless, alone. His eyes shut and he tried to fight against that feeling. But Reisi was right. He was no longer a king. He was powerless. And Reisi was superior to him now, in every respect. In this condition, Mikoto couldn't even hurt a fly. They were no longer equals. Without his fire, worlds separated them, tearing apart every common ground they had. Turning them into total strangers. Erasing everything that had tied them together. This realization made the feeling of weakness even worse. Perhaps he shouldn't have come in the first place...

The tall man with the glasses stopped beside him and gave him a calm look. The darkness seemed to have eased his anger. "...Would you like some tea?"

Seriously. What on earth was wrong with this man? How could he possibly think he would like to drink some of his disgusting tea now? Mikoto wanted to toss a sharp comment at him. Instead, he realized he was shaking his head. "No, thanks..."

A sigh rang from Reisi's throat, but the black-haired man did not move an inch further. Instead, Mikoto could still feel his burning gaze on him. He seemed to wait for Mikoto to make the first step. And the red-haired man seriously wondered if Reisi could see how uncomfortable he felt. The darkness and the moonlight around them made him just a little less uncomfortable, but the man with the golden eyes was grateful, nevertheless. He took a shallow breath before he turned around and looked into his opponent's eyes. He didn't know what to say, where to begin. Let alone, how to find the right words. But he finally needed an answer.

"...Why are you avoiding me?"

His eyelids slid over the purple of his eyes, as he took a deep breath. For a second, Mikoto almost believed he wouldn't answer. But as his lips parted again, a cold shiver trickled down his spine.

"...I still owe you a thank you, Suoh. Because... you saved my life."

Mikoto's mouth twisted inevitably. Why was he evading his question? And why did he still call him by his last name? Was he really worth so little to him? Did Reisi want to oust the past? Continue to pretend nothing had happened between them? And why was he suddenly beginning to thank him? A violent swallowing bruised his throat, but he wasn't ready to give up just yet. His glare was relentless.

"...You didn't answer my question."

"...You didn't only save me, but also the whole city. Without you... I would be dead now... and the city in ruins..." He was still not looking at him, deliberately failing to hear what he didn't want to hear. "That's why ...I am in your debt, Suoh."

"Reisi..." he whispered, unable to take his eyes off him.

"I'm only doing my duty. I can't let you go unpunished. You have broken laws... and you have to answer to your crimes."

"... Why did you break up with me?"

This question tore open his opponent's eyes. Wordlessly, with his mouth slightly open, Reisi stared at him but didn't seem to be prepared to answer. Nervously, his gaze plummeted to the ground again and he eventually closed his mouth.

The cold within him was growing even more intolerable at the sight of this. It felt as if he would break apart under it. A tiny, wounded smile crept across Mikoto's lips and his eyes dropped to the ground as well.

"Ah, forget it. Stupid question."

After all, he did remember Reisi's exact words at the time. He broke up with him because they simply weren't compatible. Because Mikoto was a lazy good-for-nothing, with no perspective and no ambition. Because nothing mattered to him. Because he was selfish and just abusing his power. He was the exact opposite of Reisi. Any more different wasn't possible. His smirk ached and felt wrong, but he couldn't stop smiling. Because the worst part of it was... that it was true. Still. After so many years. They were just too different. They just weren't made for each other.

Again a cold, helpless silence that built between their breaths, separated them like a wall. Mikoto wanted nothing more than to leave, but something detained him. He couldn't even describe it. Maybe it was Reisi's overwhelming aura that froze him to the spot where he stood. Maybe it was his shrinking fighting spirit, his weary limbs and exhausted body. He just couldn't move. Desperate, he raised his head again and

let his eyes glide over the figure of the man before him. He stopped on Reisi's neck, completely hidden under the white scarf he was wearing. It hurt him just by looking at it.

A painful swallowing squeezed down his throat as he tried to keep his voice even. "How are your injuries?"

Again, it took a seemingly endless moment before the black-haired man answered. His voice was calm and controlled, but there was also something subdued in it. "It's only a scratch... The Colorless King never intended to kill me in the first place ..."

What a terribly stubborn man. Golden eyes met him reproachfully. "I hardly think that it is only a scratch. ...Besides... you should let the wounds breathe... otherwise they'll never heal."

"As I said... no need to worry."

This made the redhead only angry once more. And since he had already revealed a great deal too much there was no point to hold back any further now. He took a few steps toward him until Reisi couldn't retreat any further. With an abrasive, provocative gesture, he tore the scarf from his neck, forcing the man before him to bite his lips in pain.

Even through the darkness and the light of the moon, he could see the burns on his neck very well. Crimson and black, they had eaten into his flesh, leaving him hurt and stigmatized. Like an ugly memory, they ran between his chin and his collarbone. The sight drove a knife into Mikoto's heart.

A strangled gasp escaped Reisi's throat, and he glared furiously at his opponent. "What was that for, huh?"

The red-haired man didn't bother to make eye contact. Instead, his glance wandered tirelessly over the wounds on Reisi's neck, even though the sight of it made him sick. Carefully, he raised his left hand and stroked the scars with his fingertips. The touch felt burning hot for him and freezing cold for Reisi. The burn marks on Reisi's throat exactly matched the burns on his own fingers. Under his touch his opponent winced in pain. Mikoto closed his eyes, but couldn't take his hands off him.

"I'm sorry." He whispered. "...It's all my fault."

The black-haired man held his breath and stared at his friend, his eyes unsteady with emotion, showing the hurt it had caused him. He tried to struggle for words, but only a lump formed in his throat. Defeated, his glare fell to the ground once more. All he could muster up was a thin whisper.

"That's not true. It ...wasn't you who did this. It wasn't your fault. ...And... without you, I would look far worse. "

"...Don't try to justify it. It is my fault..."

"Suoh"

Why? Why did he call him "Suoh?" Why did he still call him by his surname, like they were strangers? Was he just imagining things, after all? But he had seen it in his eyes. Had seen how Reisi had fought for him. Did he still have feelings for him? Or did Mikoto just wanted Reisi to feel something for him? Just another stupid pipe dream. One last time, Mikoto led his fingertips over the wounds he had inflicted before he retreated. No, this really went too far. He had to wake up already.

But then, all of the sudden, a hard grip on his wrist made him flinch. When he looked up, he saw violet eyes screaming at him as if they wanted to tell him something Reisi himself didn't have the heart to say. The redhead swallowed hard under this intense, almost wistful gaze, and felt his legs growing even weaker than they already were. For just a moment, he thought there was longing and regret in Reisi's features. The notion shook him violently, made him quaver helplessly inside.

Silently, Reisi's gaze let him free and trailed to his chest instead. Mikoto could feel how his glance cut through his skin like a burning knife. And the warm hand still holding his wrist made it even worse. Suddenly, he felt his heart pounding strongly against his ribs, filling him with a warming heat from tip to toe. He had troubles breathing and every new try just made it worse because the air was filled with Reisi's smell. It made him feel awfully dizzy. The silence pulled at him, but when the former king opened his mouth, Reisi moved again.

Just an inch he pulled closer, but it was enough for Mikoto to struggle for air. The black-haired man still held his wrist carefully, when his second hand pulled at the sleeve to reveal the burn marks on Mikoto's arm. He could see how pained his counterpart looked as he trailed the almost completely burned flesh. It caused Mikoto to shiver violently, even though his body went hotter the more distance his "friend" closed between them. He felt his pulse haunt him like an earthquake, echoing through his bones. It was too much for him. Inevitably, his breathing began to rattle loudly, attracting the Blue King's attention.

When their eyes met again, Mikoto knew it was too late. Too late for him to deny any of his feelings. Right now, he wanted nothing more than to wrap his arms around Reisi's neck and embrace him, be close to him and find strength in his arms. In this moment, he felt so powerless, so weak and abandoned, he just wanted to be allowed to rest for a while. He longed for an anchor in this endless cold sea he was floating in; he yearned for some warmth and peace. He wanted to be accepted, respected by this man for who he was and what he felt. He wanted to break the barrier that stood between them, to melt the ice in Reisi's heart. Nothing else mattered in this moment.

But he just couldn't move, didn't have the courage to step closer. All he could do was to gaze into these beautiful calm eyes that made him feel so light and forsaken at the same time. All what was left to him was to cling to the warmth Reisi's touch planted into his frozen heart and hope it would never disappear again.

Reisi's eyes narrowed as his lips parted to say something. But he seemed at loss of words and thoughts as well. Slowly, his hand dropped, making them lose contact. However, when the warm touch of their fingers ceased, the man with the glasses moved one step closer, making the air between them grow thinner and thinner. Mikoto could smell him, taste him already for every breath he took was full of him. It made him dizzy and sick. But still, he was lifting his chin, closing his eyes and raising his hands again, desperately yearning for any kind of contact. As their breaths collided and their noses touched, he felt a soft warmth fill the cold that plagued him. A warmth that made him feel completely at ease.

A buzz brought Reisi to a halt.

Breathlessly, he turned his head to the side as a second buzz broke the silence. He felt Mikoto's fingers clawing violently into his shoulder and how his unsteady breath bounced hotly against his cheek. When he turned his head back to meet his golden eyes, he knew he shouldn't have. Their lips were only inches away and every part of his body longed to close this distance. Mikoto swallowed hard as the buzzing continued, mocking them with its insufferable tone. Why wouldn't it stop already? Helplessly, he looked at Reisi, his eyes screaming at him not to turn away now. But Reisi's glance raced down and drilled into the ground. Only a whisper escaped his bruised throat.

"...I'm sorry... I have to answer this..."

Of course he had to. Of course it was more important than him. What wasn't more important to Reisi than him? It only took a few seconds for the horrible cold to return and eat away at his soul once more. It filled him up from tip to toe when Reisi retreated and pulled his cell phone out of his uniform. Rejected and powerless, Mikoto stayed where he was. Reluctantly, he stared at the floor and cursed the world and whoever had the nerve to call Reisi now. Luck just wasn't on his side, was it?

Or maybe this was just what had to happen. Maybe he should finally learn from all those hints given. It was better if they stayed "friends" or "enemies" or whatever they were. They had had their chance, and it went terribly wrong. They weren't made for each other after all.

"Suoh..."

Mikoto knew that he was supposed to look at him, but he refused. As long as he used that name, he wouldn't respond at all...

From the corner of his eye he saw Reisi approaching, dressing in his uniform again. Mikoto still averted his gaze, even though they were close again. His penetrating scent filled the air again, but now it just made him sick, sapping the power from his legs.

"...I have to go."

Cumbersome, dejected and crestfallen, he managed a nod and closed his eyes. Of course. What did he expect? How high had the chances been that Reisi would have stayed instead of cowardly running from him? He had done this every time now, hadn't he? Running away from any conflict with him... anything that involved them being more than just "friends".

"I..." The Blue King began, softly, almost whispering. "I'm sorry, Suoh. It's very important... But... you're welcome to stay... if you want. ... You're right... we should really talk."

Mikoto didn't reply. He neither had the courage nor the desire to deign his "friend" with a look. He didn't notice how Reisi had raised his hand, wanting to touch him but lowering it again just before he did so. Resigning, he turned around and forced himself back into his boots. Tucking the sword onto his belt, he turned around one last time. But Mikoto, still hadn't moved an inch and still refused to award him with a single glance. Painfully, Reisi lowered his head again, taking one last deep breath before he put his fingers on the door handle. Words were on his lips, without him having the courage to say them.