

Wounds

A perpetrator's perspective

Von Gepo

Kapitel 12: Wisdom of the mute

He got Mitobe's number from Kuroko. After hearing what his current task was, he happily supplied it after asking the man. Mitobe seemed to study at a lesser university in Tokio and had agreed to meet him after what Kuroko told him. Hopefully they would be able to communicate somehow. He got a message with a meeting place for Sunday afternoon.

He didn't expect to find a basketball court but he should have known. They were all basketball geeks after all. So he wasn't surprised to recognize the former Seirin starters, the cat-like reserve player and a few current Seirin members who still went to school. He didn't expect to find the Midorima family with them.

"Hey, Aomine!" Kazu waved his hand before concentrating on the current game. For some reason he was point guard for the team playing against Midorima who was lead by Seirin's former point guard.

The blue-haired sat down next to Kikyo who enthusiastically greeted him. She continued to tell him what the score was, which round and some basic basketball rules. Honestly he was impressed by the three-year-old. She was beyond smart.

Without question, Midorima ruled the court. Aomine itched to go up against him but the dull throb of his rib reminded him how bad an idea that was. Though Junpei wasn't half-bad himself, he ran a surprisingly good defense against the miracle shooter. So most plays were on the inside with Teppei and Mitobe facing each other as centers. Teppei was clearly better but Mitobe did not let that get to him. His hook shoots often made Teppei unable to reach and his defense was superb. The power forwards were both younger players – not bad but nowhere near good either. The other two players were that catlike reserve – Aomine couldn't remember his name – and someone from Kuroko's year who he had not seen playing before.

After a few minutes they seemed to reach half-time – Kikyo had a time stopper with her that rang after ten minutes – so the players relaxed and began talking. Midorima greeted him with a nod, Kazu came over and cuddled his daughter who reacted with "Ihh! You're sweaty!".

Mitobe and the cat-like guy approached him, so he stood. Mitobe smiled but stopped after a moment. The other guy looked at him and suddenly said: "He asks if you really are here to learn something about body language and being nice without talking."

Aomine blinked. It took him a moment before he asked: "How the hell did you get that?"

"It's obvious to me." He shrugged. "I've known Mitobe for years."

“Okay ... I have seen nothing but him looking at you and raising an eyebrow.”

“That’s enough to know what he thinks.” The guy smiled cat-like.

“Well ... yeah, I’d like to learn. I’m shit with words, so my first task is to be nice with my body.”

Mitobe looked at him, pointed at his mouth and smiled.

“He says you should smile back when someone smiles at you.” The other translated.

“I kinda got that myself.” He sighed deeply and got out a notebook Satsuki had gotten him. “I am tasked with writing everything down that I should learn.”

Mitobe nodded at the other guy, pointing at Aomine, himself, the court and then turning his hand. Aomine really had no idea at all what that could mean, so he looked at the shorter guy.

“He thinks it will be easier for you to learn when it pertains to basketball. So he will show one behavior on the court and then change it. He wants you to observe the differences and how they change the flow of the game.”

“Is that a game?” Kikyo cut in.

“Yeah, sounds fun.” Kazu smiled. “Kikyo, I want you to help uncle Aomine and tell him when you notice a change in Mitobe’s behavior.”

“I will do my best!” She grinned in excitement, coming to stand beside him. “Can we start the game?”

“Give us a moment to recharge, princess. Half-time is ten minutes.” Kazu took two plastic bottles out of his back and threw one at Midorima who caught it in flight without even looking while talking to Junpei. Damn, those two were still amazing.

Mitobe got a plastic bowl from his back, supplying the others with honeyed lemons. So he did win their favor with something. Aomine wanted to snatch one but most likely that wasn’t nice. So he asked instead and immediately got one. Huh. That was easy. Easier still when after supplying everyone Mitobe offered him another without him having to ask. Sweet.

Kazu programmed the time stopper, giving it back to Kikyo. She pressed the starting button when Teppei threw the ball before becoming one of the players again. Aomine settled down next to her and started staring at the hook shooter.

“He’s only staring at the ball.” Kikyo mentioned after a few plays.

Aomine had noticed the same. The only time he did not look at the ball was when the point guard caught it and was searching for someone to pass to. Somehow he was still able to keep up with Teppei’s movements but somehow it all seemed ... off. Seirin focused on teamwork. Mitobe’s behavior clearly destabilized them. It got worse and worse. They passed less, their passes got sloppy. They fell back and not even Midorima’s genius seemed able to save them. Inside play changed to outside play, getting two of the other team’s players to focus on the miracle shooter. It was amazing how much Mitobe’s behavior changed their play. When they were ten points behind – in six minutes! – Mitobe made a complete behavioral turn.

“He’s looking at the others again!” Kikyo mentioned excitedly. “Look, he observes the whole court.”

“You’re right.” His eyes were glued on Mitobe. It wasn’t only where he was looking. Instead of staring at the ball, he looked others in the eye. Sometimes he even communicated with his eyes. When the point guard looked at him, he sometimes leaned left or right, running there after a slight nod back. He exchanged whole strategies with his point guard in silence.

Aomine got his pen and began to write down what he saw. Kikyo supplied him with things to write like saying “He’s screening” or “He passed”. Mitobe had changed from

a complete shut-off to 100% team-player, communicating with his eyes and hand movements. The blue-haired didn't even dare to ask how a three-year-old knew how screening worked but he already concluded that Kikyo was very far from any normal three-year-old. Kazu was raising a little Midorima genius.

Mitobe's team reduced their point difference to two points that way when the timer went off. Amazing. Aomine knew how Kuroko could turn a whole game around, he just never focused on the how. With Mitobe, he learned how offensive team-play worked. When the guy held out his hand, he handed over the notebook without words. Mitobe nodded after reading it, pointing at him, then Izuki and Takao, then waving an arc with his hand.

Aomine looked at the cat-like guy who translated: "He wants you to observe the point-guards now and play as a point guard yourself in the next game."

"What?" His eyes widened. "Point-guard? I never played anything else than power forward."

There was another silent communication in which Mitobe only nodded before the other said: "He wants you to try your best to incorporate what you watched."

"I should do all this myself as a point-guard? He wants me to play 100% support?"

"Yes. It is needed for what he wants to explain afterwards." Another silent communication. "He wishes you good luck and cheers you on to do your best."

"Glorious!" Kazu, who stood beside them again, grinned. "You get my place in the next game. I'll give you pointers how to advance your play."

Aomine scoffed and mumbled: "I don't need pointers, I can do it."

"No pressing forward, always passing the ball, next to never making a play yourself?"

Kazu smirked. "I doubt you can overcome your instincts that easily. Harder than that will be keeping the overview, planning out plays beforehand and acting accordingly. I don't think I ever saw you screen someone."

Aomine's corner of the mouth twitched. Yeah. This would be completely different. He even got what Mitobe wanted to tell him without saying so: By always playing selfishly and ignoring everyone else, he had learned to do the same outside of the basketball court as well. So first he had to learn to play team basketball before he was able to apply the same to normal life. That was surprisingly accurate and helpful. Now he only had to do it ... no matter his bravado, it would be hard. He observed both Kazu and Izuki, knowing he would suck next to them. They had a great overview, not only knowing where everyone was but also where everyone would be in a second. It sounded as impossible as copying Akashi but Kise had done it, so somehow this must be doable. The game ended with Kazu's team winning by two points which made Midorima grumpy. Little Kikyo patted his head when her other father held her up which was unbelievably cute.

"Great game, everyone!" Teppei grinned, getting everyone's attention with his overpowering voice. "So I heard we're doing a switch-up now? Aomine as a point guard?" His grin enlarged. "How about having everyone switch positions? I haven't played point guard in a while."

Mitobe raised his arm in a shooting motion which had him immediately appointed as shooting guard. Midorima nodded and said "Center" which led to one of their former power forwards lowering his arm immediately. With a grin, Junpei said: "Then I'll play center against you, you really got me riled up this game."

"Riled up and filed away-"

"Shut up, Izuki!" The former shooter shouted.

"But that way one of us will be power forward again if Kazu doesn't play" One of the

younger ones said.

"I don't think I can be a good power forward" The cat-like boy admitted.

"Come on, Koganei, let's face each other as power forwards." Kazu stood again. "Is it okay if one of you is a referee?"

"I'll do it. My distance shooting is horrible." A younger member went over to Kikyo.

"Will you be my assistant?"

"I will." She smiled up at him and gave over the timer. "You program it."

"Okay, let's split up. As Aomine is the only fresh one here, I choose first. Junpei, you're with me." Teppei decided.

"Really? You don't want Midorima?" The former captain blinked. "I hope you know he's better than me." His old teammate only smiled to that.

So Midorima was on his team. Sweet. A reliable center was a good thing. So next he needed a shooter. Mitobe or the young guy? "Mitobe is with me."

"Kazu with me" Teppei said.

"I'm doomed to never play with my beloved husband again" That one said theatrically.

"Izuki with me." He was the only one Aomine knew the name of and he did not want to make a fool out of himself. So he had Midorima as center, cat-guy as power forward, Mitobe as a shooter and Izuki as ... maybe a small power forward? He wasn't exactly sure. With this team, he should focus on outside plays.

The other team formed a circle and began to make plans. When his own group looked at him, he nearly choked on his spit before saying: "Sorry if I blow this. Holding back and supporting is not my thing."

"The plan will be to have Koganei and Izuki make mixed outside and inside plays. Mitobe should stay strictly outside but his inside is a lot better, so if you see a chance, go for it. Don't fear to shoot, I'll get your rebounds" Midorima planned for them, showing that his strategic mind was applicable to basketball. "Aomine, get the ball to one of those three. Only shoot if you are wide open and then only from outside. Do not make inside plays. I know you could but you are a point-guard this game. If no one is free, I'll run free so that you can pass to me." Oh, he hated to be commandeered by the loony-boon but he wanted to win this, no matter if that wasn't the reason they were doing it. "Don't forget that Teppei is larger than you and can make outside shoots very accurately. He will use that to his advantage."

"I'm good at jumping."

"Yeah, but he is good at faking. He'll make you jump and will pass while you are still in the air. If Teppei attempts to shoot, everyone should be on their guard and closely follow their mark. Therefore I think man-to-man-defense is the best."

They all nodded, hearing the others make a battle-cry. With a look at themselves, they just nodded, thinking the situation too awkward for their own one. Midorima moved into starting position and Aomine let him, though it felt strange. He stood to his right, knowing that the guy was left-handed. Their referee threw the ball and the game begun.

They lost and he had no one but himself to account for it. Still no one blamed him. Every break Izuki and Kazu – even though that one was in the other team – gave him tips and he had slowly improved. But the basics were what almost did him in. Observing others, reading their movements, keeping an overview, silently communicating with others, planning out their movements and strategy, passing, staying in the shadow, all this coordination, he felt like getting a headache.

When he saw Mitobe approaching with another box of honeyed lemons, he gratefully

took one, said thanks and looked him in the eye while doing so. The other nodded with a smile and gave him a thumbs-up. He did not really need Koganei's translation: "He says you did well and that you learned enough for one day."

"Yeah, thanks." He scratched his head. "I guess there is more to learn? You said this was preparation for a lecture."

Mitobe nodded, making an arc with his hand.

"Is next time next Sunday?" Somehow he had gotten a knack for the gestures, most were quite easy.

"Same place, two o'clock" Koganei informed him.

"Okay." He slumped a bit, hanging his head. "Thanks again ... for doing this. I know you are only doing this because Kuroko asked."

There was a moment silence before a hand raised his chin and another patted his shoulder. Koganei ran a translation again, though he did not look happy while doing so: "Mitobe hates violent Alphas, so he is actually doing it for you. He likes the fact that you want to change and is proud of you for doing this. He also says you should be proud as well."

"O... kay. Is there a specific reason you do not like violent Alphas?"

Mitobe pointed at his throat while his friend explained: "His father beat his mother up and he tried to protect her. His father choked him, nearly killing him and taking his voice in the process."

"I am so sorry." Aomine found he actually meant that. God, he knew how it was to be nearly killed by his own bastard of a father. His instincts told him to avert his gaze but he didn't. He wanted Mitobe to get that he understood. He was sorry for so much.

The other smiled sadly and shook his head. Koganei stayed silent.

"I'll learn this, so I don't do more shit" Aomine promised. It was the only thing he could do: Not repeat his father's mistake and live the way of violence.