

# Not good enough

Von Gepo

## Kapitel 3: The question why

So Tatsuya went back to teacher Tsueda to ask him about Murasakibara. It was the first time he saw that blushing, coy face change to a halfway serious expression. The man said: "Mister Himuro, for one I am very glad that you still spent time with Murasakibara. He seems to have had friends in middle-school but before that he had always been alone. Those friends were his basketball teammates, so I am not too sure how deep that friendship ran. But like you, most of them seem to have been incredibly gifted students who could afford someone like Murasakibara in their circle without having to look down on him. What you described to me is exactly how I know him as well. He can only do calculus with numbers up to five and he won't learn more than that. In math I give him practical work, so he has to calculate prices for shopping items. It's so he knows what the ingredients for his favorite dishes cost and how much he can afford for the budget he might have in the future. We try to give all students the chance to live by themselves, even though most of them never will. Murasakibara is one of those that most likely never will but I am loath to give up hope. So I try to prepare him for the reality he will have to live in."

Oh. So that really was the best he could do? That was ... not a lot. It most likely was for him. Tatsuya could not even imagine that. What his friend had learned in ten years of school was what Tatsuya had learned in two or three months.

"Language is about learning to read and write. His writing really needs more work and that will be his main focus for the next three years. Some boys learn English, Murasakibara won't. Otherwise we have cooking classes which he excels in and a lot of practical skill classes like wood-working, sewing and some others. We also have music and art. Murasakibara is able to play one drum."

So he was in high-school to learn to write more legible and try to learn basic survival skills for living by himself. Why should he even live by himself? He could always live with one of his friends, couldn't he? But no, he would always feel like an underdog. If he were to live with people like him, they would need someone to look after them. Would he always live in a dormitory then?

"Do you think he'll be able to hold a job?"

"If someone is willing to guide him, sure. He is a great baker. Maybe he could work at a small bakery with a head baker who needs a helping hand. But try to imagine him in a baking faculty which bakes for hundreds of bakeries."

Tatsuya simply nodded. Even if it was just filling a pot with kilograms of sugar and flour, Murasakibara was likely to mess up counting the sacks he had to throw in. He would need someone to tell him which sacks to throw in and when to stop. What worked for baking one cake would not work for a baking company. Murasakibara's

options were pretty limited.

"So what are his homework sheets about? Maybe I can help."

"That would be great!" Tsueda smiled. "Most of them are about Katagana. He is to redraw them twenty times or so. Instead I get back sheets filled with butterflies. I still haven't gotten why. Sometimes I have him draw the letter five times before letting him go but he still does not continue to draw it again later. He even has his earlier drawings right in front of his eyes. I don't get it."

Hm, yeah, that was mysterious. He was able to see, Tatsuya knew that from practice. Why draw butterflies when the letter was in front of him? He promised: "I'll try to find out."

"Please do." Tsueda smiled. "His former teachers thought it was laziness and punished him, but I don't think that's it. He's always jealous when the other boys get candy for their homework and he doesn't. Something else seems to block him but he won't say, no matter how I ask."

Punished. As in beaten and taken food from? For drawing butterflies instead of Katagana? Tatsuya felt an unimaginable sadness well up inside of him. He could imagine a little boy with lavender-colored hair getting praised for his beautiful butterflies. And then he had to imagine a freakishly tall boy with the same hair getting beaten for drawing butterflies. Was Murasakibara even able to understand why people did that? Or was the world nothing but chaos to him? Maybe he was still that little boy that did not understand why drawing butterflies did not lead to pats on the head anymore.

When he went back to where he had left his friend (sitting outside under a tree) he found him drawing butterflies. He wasn't sure he had ever seen someone this content by simply looking at a butterfly flutter by.

Tatsuya did not understand why but he suddenly felt hot tears run down his cheeks.

In the evening Murasakibara colored his homework sheet. Tatsuya simply sat down next to him and watched him draw a butterfly. Should he just ask? But most likely teachers had asked again and again and failed. Maybe he should not start by asking. Maybe he should start by drawing a butterfly. He took a pink crayon and began to add his own butterfly to the sheet.

Murasakibara added dots to it and Tatsuya colored. His friend smiled at him. So he felt free to ask: "Shall we draw that letter together?"

After a nod from the other Tatsuya drew the first line. The giant added one, he did another. Murasakibara studied the original before adding the dots. Tatsuya praised him and tasked him with drawing the first line this time. After the next one he asked the other to do one himself. That seemed considerably harder but his friend did it. Tatsuya urged him to try again and Murasakibara drew one after the other until it became easy to him. As easy as drawing small characters was to a man with hands as large as the whole sheet.

"Well done. Teacher Tsueda will be proud of you tomorrow."

"Really?" Murasakibara smiled upon hearing that. "Do you think I'll get candy?"

"I hope so. If you do the task he sets you, you get some as a reward, right?"

"I never got candy for homework." He pouted.

"Well, you haven't done the task he set up to now, right?"

"What was the task?" The lavender-colored eyes looked at him questioningly.

"You were to draw this letter twenty times. Don't you remember that task?" Tatsuya felt his heart sink.

Really? Murasakibara had been punished because he couldn't remember the tasks? His friend shook his head. That was cruel, just cruel. Of course if someone asked him why he hadn't done his homework he would truthfully say that he couldn't remember. Teachers would get angry because they thought he lied. But he didn't lie. He really was unable to remember.

"Do you often forget things?"

Murasakibara just blinked. Yeah, stupid question. How was he to know if he had never known differently?

"Do you remember my name?"

"Muro-chin," his friend answered and smiled.

"Very good. How were you able to remember?"

Murasakibara sat up a bit and took something from his back pocket. It was a card made from thick paper which had a few names on it. On the top was Tsueda, then coach Araki, their captain and below was his own name with the label "beautiful", all of them in carefully drawn letter. The giant said: "Mama says names are very important. So I write down names I shouldn't forget."

"That's really smart." Tatsuya smiled while trying to hold back tears. Yes, he pitied his friend. This was just cruel. How did the guy survive? "Maybe you should write down your homework tasks."

"I'll try to remember."

Tatsuya made a mental note to talk about that with teacher Tsueda. Was it possible that with a file that thick people had missed his memory deficiency? How long did his memory last?

"Can you remember what we had for lunch?"

Murasakibara shook his head.

"Can you remember when you last had a snack today?"

The other patted his stomach as if he would be able to find out from that and guessed: "Dinner?"

"Yeah, you had one before dinner." And another right before homework which they had begun around a quarter of an hour before.

"Can you remember what was your homework today?" Tatsuya dreaded the answer a bit.

Murasakibara seemed to think for a second but shook his head.

So ... he did not remember what happened more than a minute before. That was bad. Time to test this: "Do you know what an elephant looks like?"

"Yeah, I saw one at the zoo." Murasakibara smiled.

"Did it have big ears?"

"So big!" The giant stretched his arms wide.

"Do you remember what we talked about before we talked about elephants?" Please let him remember, please, please, please. Tatsuya bit his lower lip.

"Homework?" Murasakibara glanced at the sheet in front of him. Well, maybe that had been too easy. Maybe he had guessed.

"Which animals did you draw on it?"

"Butterflies." He looked at them. "I like butterflies. They have so many colors."

"Can you remember which animals we talked about before?" Tatsuya balled his hands into fists.

Murasakibara blinked and finally said unsurely: "Butterflies?"

The Omega closed his eyes.

Teacher Tsueda looked as if he would cry any time now. He sighed and led Tatsuya to an empty classroom. His face looked grave as if he was about to give him very bad news. Well, maybe that was what was about to happen.

"Himuro, as you might know I am not allowed to tell anything about any of my students," the teacher said and sat down on a free chair, "but I owe you an explanation."

Tatsuya sat down in front of him. This was good but at the same time ... this would be hard.

"Most mentally disabled boys are born this way. They grow up with it and they are slow but able to learn. It's different with Murasakibara. He was born normal but he had a car accident when he was four years old. Due to the bleeding he became like this. He's had memory problems ever since. Some days it's better, some days it's worse. You seem to have experienced a very bad day. I got from the file that normally, he can remember things for a bit. He's not completely unable to make new experiences. It's why he was able to learn as much as he did. And he does recognize you, doesn't he? So he can remember your face."

Yeah. He had been able to remember him. The coach, the captain and him. He had not recognized the punk that had quit the team after their first practice. He had not recognized their home-economics teacher. He only recognized the people written on his list without fault. He did remember some others but they seemed to need to be important for that to work.

So that was why he was like this. It was very hard for him to make new memories. Not only was he slow due to that, he was an oddity even among other mentally disabled boys. How was it possible for one sixteen-year-old to be so utterly alone?

"It's hard, right? I thought the same when I read that file."

"He's such a good boy. He is sweet and always tries his best. He has a great personality. He needs so little to be happy ... like butterflies." Tatsuya smiled sadly.

"He'll be in a suitable institute for the rest of his life. He'll have time to watch butterflies."

"He can't even reflect how sad his situation is." He shook his head.

"That's true. But maybe it's a blessing. He can enjoy life that way."

"Can he? Do you think he's happy?" Tatsuya looked up to see Tsueda's eyes.

"He looks happy to me. Especially now that you care for him. I sent his mother a picture and she said she hasn't seen him smile this earnestly for more than six years. He talks about you in class. All the boys are quite jealous, you know?" The teacher smiled at him. "I think half the class is in love with you."

Tatsuya blushed at that. He hadn't blushed for years! But how should you react to such a statement? Loads of people lusted after him but Murasakibara ... he had never let that on. He had marked him as "beautiful" to remember him by, so yeah, it seemed true. But his friend had never acted on it. Did he understand sexuality?

"Do you think he might be dangerous? I am an Omega after all."

Tsueda's face fell. Not only that, he looked like he had received a punch in the face. It took a moment for him to answer in a small voice: "His middle-school teacher wrote down that Murasakibara told him about raping an Omega. But the Omega in question denied that. He said it was consensual."

"So he does know what sex is?" That was worrisome.

"Very much so. The Omega seemed to have become pregnant and aborted the child. Murasakibara cried in class, it was how it came out. The class got sexual education after that. So he should know about sex and condoms." Tsueda looked at him for a

longer moment. "Are you interested in him that way?"

"What?" Tatsuya looked up in shock. "No!"

"I was just wondering." The teacher held up his hands. "I did not mean to pry."

"Do you think he remembers?" The Omega only whispered.

"I did not dare to ask," Tsueda admitted. "He seems to like small children. His mother told me he likes to play with them. He's still a four-year-old inside, so they share the same interests. She asked him about family and he told her he wants children of his own one day. I just don't see anyone willing to marry him."

"Well, his pheromones are god-like." Did he really just say that? "He would have been incredible without that accident. Tall, strong, smart, just perfect."

"His father seems to be such an Alpha." Tsueda shook his head. "He left the family after the accident. Murasakibara is an only child, he only has his mother left."

Tatsuya sighed and shook his head. Such a pity. Such a waste. If not for that one accident ... well, that was most likely what everyone thought when they looked at him. Tatsuya should not even start with it. It was how it was. Murasakibara was mentally disabled and had memory problems. He was still a great basketball player and could draw colorful butterflies.

It was how it was.