Wolf-ish

by Blueismybusiness

Summary

Kei, Tobio, and Shouyou have been caught up in a web of deceit and conspiracy centered on an anomaly in their genetics. As if navigating high school and the road to Nationals wasn't difficult enough, now the boys must put aside their differences and discover why the government is so interested in a myth. Perhaps it has something to do with their strange pheromones, or the way they grow fangs and claws when angry. Maybe it's in the way they seem less human and more...wolf-ish.

Notes

Wolf-ish Revised: 12/25/17 - Suggest re-reading from beginning.

UPdates bi-weekly.

BIMB
Prologue

Chapter Notes

Revised 12/25/17

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

*Beta Gene: From the World Scientific Journal*

The Beta Gene is a genetic anomaly. It occurred at some point thousands of years ago- scientists are still trying to pinpoint the relative age at which it first appeared- and not a whole lot is known about it. What is known is that some time in human history, our genes evolved a mutation that closely resembled that of *canis lupus* or wolf. Popular theory holds that some portion of humanity (neither *Neanderthal* or *homo sapien*) developed these genes as a response to environment, as evolutionary traits do, then met and mixed with the latter two groups and the genes were passed on. No one knows for sure how or when this occurred, only that for both *Neanderthal* and *homo sapien* the genes were not there and then they were. The original entities to carry this gene have never been found. Currently, debates are ongoing.

The gene, itself, is passed down from the *mater*- called such as both Beta females and Omegas (male and female) can birth offspring.

There are three dominant genders; Alpha, Beta, Omega. When a human is born with the Beta gene, the typical human male/female labels become arguable as one presents. Driven by instincts, their dominant gender usually becomes their primary gender as they live in such a way that is consistent with their nature.

The Alpha is much like what one would expect in such a term. They are usually large in musculature, more so than average for any given human male. They are usually assertive, bordering on aggressive and sometimes dangerous. Once a month they cycle through what is referred to as *rut*, a period of increased testosterone production that has a significant influence on sexual arousal, specifically focused on mating an Omega and lasts roughly three to four days. During this time, Alphas may experience an increase in aggression and the need to mark territory.

Alphas produce pheromones distinctly geared toward marking territory and attracting a mate. During the sex act, Alphas produce a knot at the base of the shaft of the penis, much like the canine, and it collects semen in order to ensure pregnancy and the production of offspring, and like the canine, the Alpha must remain locked to their Omega until swelling is reduced.

Alphas are always male. Little else is known about the physiology of the Alpha.

The Omega is the mate of the Alpha. They are usually less aggressive but more territorial and are inferior in size and strength to the Alpha, though still superior to the average human. Unlike the Alpha, the Omega can present as either female or male, the latter happening only in instances where females are scarce. It should be noted that there are no known records of the opposite happening for Alphas.
Like their counterpart, the Omega cycles through a once a month heat, with an increase in sexual arousal. However, the duration of heat is half the time of rut. In females, heat happens in conjunction with ovulation cycles and with the exception of an increase in both arousal and reproductive capabilities, there is technically no difference to female homo sapiens.

For male Omegas heat drastically differs from the female. Male Omegas produce slick, a substance produced in glands purportedly located in the anus that aid in lubrication, just like the vagina in females. What information exists suggests fertile Omegan males are rare and that mortality rates increase exponentially for both the Omega and fetus/infant during pregnancy and labor. Statistics are unavailable. Despite ongoing research, available data lacks conclusive information about how it is possible for Omegan males to give birth, and as a consequence, not much else is known about the male Omegan physiology.

Both Omegan females and males have an extra muscle that aid in locking their mate in the conclusion of the sex act.

Both female and male Omegas have scent glands just as the Alpha do and they emit pheromones to attract mates and mark territory and are only accepted by a compatible partner. Scent glands are typically located along the trapezius, both wrists, and the Omegan has a third set either in the vaginal or anal cavity depending on secondary sex. Alpha and Omega genders will consummate their union with a permanent bond mark along the scent glands.

Alphas and Omegas will only mate with each other. In the case of limited availability, two Alphas have been reported to fight over an Omega. There is only one known record of a fatality.

Both have heightened senses but Alphas have exceptional strength.

The Beta is essentially neither until presentation, which occurs on average during puberty but has been known to happen during late adolescents, though it is rare. If a Beta never presents, they are considered subBeta or carriers of the gene- genetically human with non-dominant traits that are passed along to their offspring through the Beta female or Omega. Characteristics of dominant genders usually do not appear until after presentation, although sometimes “signs” of gender traits can be seen beforehand. These signs are not always reliable, however, and can have a detrimental effect if presenting gender is not wanted.

It should be said that the Beta gene has decreased in presentation after many years. It is rare now that any population would produce such an anomaly. Most records show a severe decline during a society’s industrial revolution, correlations undetermined. What records do exist of modern Beta genes happen in cultures with little to no industry and whose cultures are still heavily linked to nature.

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Patient number: 1   Current date: 12/27/20-
Born: Hinata Shōyō
Patient number: 2  Current date: 12/27/20-
Born: Tsukishima Kei
Father: Tsukishima Hiroji, non-carrier
Mother: Tsukishima Ome, subBeta, has been monitored
Siblings: Tsukishima Akiteru, subBeta, has been monitored.
DOB: 09/27/20-
Current Length: 71.12 cm
Current Weight: 4.99 kg
Notes: Patient is healthy. Growth is exceptional. Shows advances in cognitive functioning but still age appropriate. All other milestones on target. No other medical concerns. Will continue to monitor.

~O~

Director, another Beta has been found.
Another!?
Yes sir.
Let me see.

Patient number: 3  Current date: 12/27/20-
Born: Kageyama Tobio
Father: Kageyama Yoshitori, non-carrier
Mother: Kageyama Sata, subBeta, has been monitored.
Siblings: NA
DOB: 12/22/20-
Length: 51 cm
Weight: 5.44 kg
Notes: Patient was born healthy with no concerns during screening. Genetic testing done in prenatal stage was positive for Beta gene. Will continue to monitor.

If the genetic test came back positive, why was I not informed until now?
I don't know, sir, but I can find out.

... 

A third...

Yes, sir.

Is it strange that they were all born in the same prefecture?

...I don't know, sir. There is speculation that they are drawn to one another like natural wolves. A pack mentality, you could say.

But they don't know?

Not that I am aware of, sir.

...

And they are all males...

Yes, sir.

And born three months apart...

Yes.

Fascinating.

What would you like us to do, sir? Should we inform the board?

...I suppose we should...and continue to monitor. Report to me if anything changes.

I have already taken care of that, sir. The latest family has already been informed that continued testing will need to be done.

...what was the mother's reaction?

Same as the others, confused and worried about the health of her child.

Was anything said?

No sir.

Good. ...And make sure they don't meet. Let's observe and see what develops for a while.

Of course, sir.
Next:

Chapter 1: Tsukishima Kei

If you have any questions at any time throughout the story regarding any of the content, please feel free to ask me. As always, kudos and comments welcome.
Chapter 1: Tsukishima Kei

Elementary School, Sixth Year, Spring

Kei knew he was different. Not just “different” as in the way most angsty, pubescent children think of themselves. Those thoughts usually followed on the cusp of surging hormones flooding the minds and bodies of teenagers, leaving them feeling disconnected from the world. However, despite the rapid physical changes and volatile emotions of adolescents, those teenagers were still very much human.

Yet, that’s the problem for Kei. He’s not just “different” but different as in maybe...not-quite human. It’s a thought that grew up with him but not a thought he focused on daily. It was more like a whisper of a thought he hadn’t ever been able to forget about.

However, that thought intensified when he hit puberty. Most of the changes were slow, happening over the course of several months, but they were severe.

The most notable change was his growth spurt. He was already unusually tall as a young boy but by twelve he was already pushing 167.2 cm. He hit puberty and within months had put on another five centimeters and plateaued from there for a while. This did nothing to endear him to a crowd that was already wary of him. If anything it only solidified his isolation. Not that he minded. He was perfectly happy to spend his time alone or with Yamaguchi, his best friend, who was about the only person he could tolerate outside of his family. Even then, that was debatable.

Another change, less conspicuous though more startling, happened during moments of great stress for Kei. The first time it occurred was the night he found his brother sobbing on the floor of his room after his last volleyball game of high school. Kei had caught his brother, the person he’d looked up to most in his life, in a lie. A lie that had kept Kei in the dark for years. He had told himself he wasn’t angry, that the lie didn’t matter in the end, just like having passion for something was a joke. He’d watched his brother for a moment, bowed beneath shame and frustration in the middle of his bedroom floor, and told himself he felt nothing. The mind can lie to itself, the body can’t. He’d retreated to his room, biting his lip and curling his hands into tight fists, fighting back his own tears. When he’d tasted blood and felt sharp pains in his palms, he’d paused to look and saw shallow cuts in the shape of crescent moons in the meat of his hands, lines of red outlining them. For a moment he was confused because he kept his nails short. He raised his hands, turning them over to gaze at his nails only to discover they’d grown several centimeters. He’d licked his lip, then, his brow furrowed in disbelief, and again tasted blood. He touched his fingers to his sore lip and drew them away, the tips red.

He went to the bathroom to wash his hands, his heart racing from so many different emotions. Confusion, hurt, anger naming a few. He looked into the mirror after flipping the light switch and sucked in a sharp breath, startled by what he saw. Not only had his nails grown, but so had his canines, both top and bottom. They’d elongated, not much but enough to be noticeable, curving slightly and ending in sharp points. He’d tilted his head, in consideration of this new change but was
not afraid. It was just another change- another symptom- in a long list that let him know he did not fit into the world as comfortably as everyone else. Later, after he’d calmed, he noticed, too, that his nails and teeth reverted to normal. With the betrayal of his brother and the newest alteration to his body appearing came an empty quiet settling over him. It wasn’t hard to figure out that his emotional state would affect his physical, and the hurt caused by his brother made it easy for him to sink into permanent disinterest.

A second, more subtle piece of evidence was his level of intelligence. Not genius perhaps, but analytical and logical, which is in itself strange for a young boy. Kei picked up new information quickly and was adept at reading a situation, to make decisions based on multiple outcomes and he left most people mystified or weirded out by him. Even before his brother’s betrayal, Kei was a solitary child. He was always polite but most people could look into his eyes and just know. And that knowing singled Kei out and put space between him and the rest of the world.

Another set of changes were his senses. This Kei knew was different. Like, who hears conversations two rooms away? It was so bad in the beginning that he would bury his head in his pillow and refuse to leave his room. That was until his parents bought him a pair of noise cancelling headphones. He could plug them into his phone and listen to music undisturbed and thereafter never left the house without them, putting them on whenever the outside world became overwhelming.

It wasn't just his hearing. All of Kei’s senses were heightened. Well, except for his eyesight and he could thank his father for passing on his astigmatism.

His sense of smell? He could honestly say that this most likely contributed to his constant sour attitude- it wasn't his fault people smelled. The whole world smelled. And he could recognize individual scents. Kei could identify them, which made him a picky eater. Combined with a heightened sense of taste and some foods were so nauseating that to be within the same room as them triggered his gag reflex. Conversely, some scents were so good- so pleasing- he would sometimes find himself unintentionally burying himself in them. In one mortifying episode Kei actually found himself sniffing a strange woman when he and Yamaguchi had been hanging out. It had nearly lead to an arrest for sexual harassment until his mom worked her magic when she arrived to find her son unhinged by the incident and Yamaguchi trying not to find too much entertainment at Kei's expense. The blonde had sworn his best friend to secrecy on threat of death if anyone found out.

Yet, that wasn't the worst of it. The absolute worst part of his heightened sensitivity was his sense of touch. The feel of certain materials could set his skin on fire or send him into paradise. Kei had an original Kashmir blanket given as a present for his birthday from his aunt who extensively traveled as an anthropologist. It had always been his favorite blanket but 'favorite' took a deep dark turn with the onset of puberty.

Once puberty rolled through, the poor blonde found himself the victim of a sexual drive to rival a rabbit. Kei had been dealing with all the changes in his body for several months and had time to adjust to them accordingly. This new one was more abrupt. He had not understood the symptoms when it hit him the first time. Like a premenstrual woman, he felt an increase in agitation and irritability he could not explain, or identify its origins. Kei's body was like a raw nerve that buzzed with every taste, touch, and sound. His clothes bothered him more than usual, his sense of smell increased, and his mood took a turn for the worse. One minute he was calm rage, the next, tearing down strangers with a violent verbal assault that had people cowering in fear of the demonic aura that surrounded him like a translucent veil of hellish evil. And all over the smallest mistakes and misunderstandings- an error in his order at the fast food restaurant or a brush of the shoulder in the hallway at school. No one was safe from his wrath, not his family, not even Yamaguchi. No one knew how to handle him and he eventually retreated to his room where he felt the safest, the calmest.
And that's when, to his shame and horror, he discovered physical pleasure unlike any he had ever known. It's not like Kei didn’t know about self-stimulation, though he rarely indulged. However, one evening, after withdrawing to his room from a particularly vexing day, he was overcome by a whole new torture, like swallowing a whole bottle of viagra kind of torture.

The moment Kei closed his doors and had thrown himself onto his bed it started. That insistent niggling in the pit of his stomach telling him his body needed...something. That feeling slowly made its way down to his groin and his clothes became uncomfortable. He tried to ignore it but he was starting to sweat as his body temperature began to rise. It was frightening, the way the feeling washed over him. There was no preparation, no...foreplay. No sexy thoughts. Nothing. Just one moment of suffocating rage, and the next, stifling arousal.

Without much thought- his brain too fuzzy with need- Kei stripped down to his boxer briefs and buried himself in his favorite blanket, hoping to deter any intruders and fool them into thinking he was napping. This proved to be an unholy mistake. As soon as the plush threads graced his naked flesh he was gone. Hours passed as he rolled and rutted and writhed, creating friction that was glorious and still unsatisfying until he exhausted himself and collapsed into unconsciousness.

The next morning it started all over again. At some point his brother knocked on his door as he hadn't left his room in well over twelve hours. Kei only shouted to be left alone, the words curling around an angry, animalistic growl punctuated by breathless moans.

Kei didn't vacate his room for a sum total of thirty seven hours, dehydrated, rubbed raw, and scared. His parents, who had worried for him after repeated attempts to coax him out, were positively terrified when their youngest son finally made his appearance. His family set about rehydrating and feeding Kei while they questioned him on everything from drug use to symptoms of rare diseases. After that, his mother set about getting him an appointment with his physician.

Since Kei had been born, he'd been subjected to regular hospital visits, once every couple of months, for tests for an unknown disorder. His doctor didn’t say much except that it was genetic and that it had likely been passed on from his mother, something she blamed herself for not even truly understanding how she could be at fault. The tests weren't bad, just troublesome. However, after his...episode, he was promptly brought before the doctors and staff who routinely observed him and made to explain his 'symptoms'. Kei was frightened by the experience and knew it wasn't normal, but that didn't make it any less humiliating to have to explain to a team of healthcare providers that he jerked himself to near bleeding for nearly two days straight.

Kei never liked his doctor visits. Instead of the somewhat homey atmosphere of most small clinics, Kei had to attend his appointments on a closed off floor of the local hospital. The environment was so sterile and cold it made him feel more like a science experiment versus a patient. On more than one occasion, because of the way the staff forced him through test after test, Kei wondered if his disorder was dangerous to the public.

"What's wrong with me?" Kei’s tone was flat as the nurse popped a tube into the line they'd placed in his vein to extract another blood sample. His face was settled into his regular blank expression, the fire that had possessed him only a week ago having run its course, so his emotions were back under his control. However, despite his ability to control his affect, his intelligent eyes glowed yellow under the fluorescent lights, studying the nurse with an intensity that had her nervously fidgeting. Her forehead wrinkled in concentration as she attempted to think up an answer. Kei didn’t think his question warranted such serious contemplation.

"I think questions like that are better left to Dr. Uemura, Kei- kun .” How diplomatic.
Kei stared her down, frustrated that she dodged this question, "But you know, don't you?"

The nurse refused to look at him, gathering the vials of blood and equipment before backing out of the door with a short bow. Kei huffed in irritation. He didn’t like being kept in the dark. He should be used to it by now after all the years of unanswered questions. He had suspected his doctor and staff knew more than they let on by the way they tittered over him when he came in, but no matter who he asked he always got the same reply, "Talk to your doctor."

As if that was any better. Dr. Uemura just compared his symptoms to the mating cycles of certain animals, a supposition that Kei found offensive. He refused to believe he was a slave to some primal sexual urge.

No matter, he would google it when he got home.

And he did, finding nothing but tips for hunting deer during rut, mental health websites, and disturbing porn fetishes. He sighed, frustrated with the lack of adequate knowledge that existed to help him understand the changes his body was going through.

There was a knock at his door and he looked up from his laptop where he sat on his bed. His brother entered carrying a black plastic bag, his face red, and avoiding Kei's calm gaze. Things had been awkward between them for years now but Kei couldn't fathom what would make his brother look absolutely mortified at that particular moment- well, except for the incident of the previous week but he didn't want to dwell on that.

"How are you feeling?" Akiteru asked, briefly glancing at Kei before darting his eyes to the floor.

"Surprisingly refreshed," Kei smirked as his brother’s blush deepened. If he had to be humiliated, then why not bring the world down with him. Or at least his brother.

"T-that's good, right?" Akiteru choked out and then coughed nervously before allowing the awkward silence to fill the room again. Akiteru nervously swung the bag and it made a crinkled tapping sound against his knee.

"Is there something you wanted, Aki?" Kei demanded, the weird silence in the room getting to him. He stared at his brother, his expression one of passive interest.

"What? Oh, yeah," Akiteru sighed before stepping forward to set the black plastic bag on the bed near Kei’s feet and retreating to his former spot in the doorway. He glanced at Kei once and mumbled, "Don't tell mom and dad," before rushing away, closing the door behind him.

Kei set aside his laptop, staring in curious hesitation at the nondescript plastic bag at the foot of his bed. He slowly and deliberately moved toward it and it shifted with his weight, the sound it made reminiscent of a rattlesnake waiting to attack. He reached out a cautious hand and looped one finger in the handle, pulling it closer. Gingerly opening it in order to allow light in so he could take a look, he quickly shoved his hand on it, squashing it closed, his face heating up though he was the only one in the room. He buried his face in his hands cursing his brother for his lack of decency. For a moment he sat like that, hands over face, staring through his fingers at the black hole of perversion on his bed.

Kei gathered his courage and grabbed the bag in one aggressive maneuver and emptied it before him. He was extremely glad his door was closed because the contents would have probably killed his mother by sheer shame alone. Akiteru had brought him a bottle of lube, a few porn magazines, one
av, and a box of...condoms? Anyway, Kei could not decide whether to be grateful or disgusted. He was mortified to be sure, but the gesture wasn't unwarranted and to be completely put off would be a waste of Akiteru's efforts to be understanding. Kei may be angry at his brother but that didn't mean he didn't love and appreciate him. Not too mention, this had to be just as embarrassing for him as it was for Kei.

Kei sighed and stuffed the items back into the bag then walked over to his closet, shoving it as far back into a dark corner as possible, making sure to camouflage it in case his mother got nosy. He was still caught up on the package of condoms when he settled himself back on his bed. What did his brother think he was going to do? He was still months away from his thirteenth birthday. Wasn't he a little young to be taking that kind of risk? Who knew when he'd be ready for that anyway and condoms have a shelf life.

His thoughts were interrupted when his phone vibrated from where it was on his desk, Yamaguchi’s number flashing on the screen. He'd forgotten how his previous physical breakdown had caused him to snap at his only friend, and he knew would have to make it up to him. Kei snatched up his well used green cell and flipped it open with one hand. The moment the call connected Yamaguchi’s voice bubbled through in a stream of questions.

"Tsukki! How are you!? Are you okay!? You're mom said you've been sick and wouldn't let me visit. You've never missed this much school! You would tell me if you're dying right!?

Yamaguchi’s voice was panicked and Kei rolled his eyes, imagining his freckled face all scrunched with worry and anxiety, eyes glistening from withheld tears. He always overthought things, working himself into a state of emotional frenzy.

"I'm fine Yamaguchi. It was just the flu." Kei hated lying to him but his family thought it best to conceal certain information as it was extremely personal. Not that Kei would have told anyone ever. He would have died rather than disclose any part of his recent experience. Trying to alleviate his best friend's fears, he added, "It was bad but I'm over it, I'm okay now."

"Are you sure? I could bring you soup. Or tissue. Or medicine. Or I could..."

"Yamaguchi, I'm okay."

"Sorry, Tsukki." Yamaguchi breathed a sigh of relief, "I was just worried."

"I know, idiot, it’s no big deal," Kei huffed in feigned irritation. It really did feel good to have a friend to worry over your well being. "And why would you need to bring all that stuff? Don't you think that my parents would make sure I have medicine?" There was laughter from the other end.

While Yamaguchi couldn't see Kei on his end, he still reflexively rubbed the back of his neck, an awkward guilt turning his features slightly pink. He still felt bad for his behavior toward Yamaguchi.

"So...Yamaguchi...You, maybe, wanna hang out this weekend? I'll treat you to some fries." When it came to apologies, this was the best Kei could do but he knew his friend would understand the gesture.

"Hah!? Awesome, Tsukki!"

Kei could hear the sound of Yamaguchi's mother yelling for him in the background.

"Oh! I gotta run. If you're at school tomorrow, let's make plans, 'kay? See ya Tsukki!"
Kei smiled into the air, “Sure, Yama. See you tomorrow.”

-O-

Patient: 2  Current date: 3/22/20-

Born: Tsukishima Kei

Father: Tsukishima Hiroji, non-carrier
Mother: Tsukishima Ome, subBeta, has been monitored
Siblings: Tsukishima Akiteru, subBeta, has been monitored.
DOB: 09/27/20-
Length: 172.2 cm
Weight: 48.53 kg
Notes: Puberty has manifested and further tests identify subject as Alpha. Subject has grown rapidly and shows no sign of slowing. Body type is thin, suspected small for an Alpha, but muscle tone and bone structure suggest that could change with maturity. He is polite to staff but overall...aura...leaves staff wary and cautious. Subject is highly intelligent and manipulative, staff finds it difficult to keep details of tests vague. Will continue to monitor subject.

“ Director, here's the latest report.”

“Hmm...so the pup survived his first rut. I don't envy him, I'll say that. Looks painful.”

“Yes, sir. The examination results are consistent with research findings. As you can see, the skin along the shaft of the penis is chafed and suggests first degree burns. The wounds were definitely self-inflicted and is consistent with compulsive masturbation. Also, if you look at the blood tests you will see an elevation in testosterone production that is higher than average even a week later. As you can also see, the patient described an increase in aggression and a period of time the patient stated he could not account for.”

“...Thank you, Doctor Uemura. What about getting him in here for his next one?”

“Way ahead of you, sir. We informed his mother that if the symptoms persist or return, bring him in immediately. This way we can observe and monitor changes as they happen.”

“Good. We will prepare a suppressant if his ruts continue to be this severe. That will be all, Doctor Uemura.”

“Thank you, Director.”

“...”

“...What is it, Uchikoshi.”
“There is another issue, sir.”

“Another issue?”

“Yes, sir. The boy suspects we know more than we let on. I feel it will become increasingly difficult to maintain ignorance for too long.”

“...Continue to say nothing. I don't want have any influence on events as they occur for the time being.”

“Yes, Director.”.

~O~

Middle School, Third Year, Fall

There was something about that boy Kei just couldn't stand and it wasn't just his high-and-mighty attitude on the court. True, he was a pompous egomaniac and the "King of the Court" nickname was more than fitting. He watched from the sidelines while the dark haired setter flubbed one toss after another with his ridiculous expectations, and an irrational dislike burned within Kei. He'd never even spoken to him but that didn't stop him from almost baring his teeth in disgust, holding back last minute, running his tongue over long canines as a reminder to that no one needed to see them. He’d had enough trouble keeping them hidden since they’d first grown earlier that day.

His team had come for the inter-middle school prefectural championship held every year and had lost during their second game. Well, they had been destroyed, but that was not important and Kei had not been surprised. Most of his team were still recovering from disappointment, tears drying on their faces, but Kei was unconcerned. He'd almost expected it, his team was by far not the strongest in the prefecture. After their loss they had opted to stay to watch Kitagawa Daiichi and see the notorious King in person. It had, so far, not been a disappointment.

Kei shifted in his seat unable to get comfortable. The setter’s angry voice rose above the noise of the gymnasium though the words were swallowed up in the tumult. The sound of it was like styrofoam rubbing together, and made his fists tighten, his long nails biting into the flesh of his palms. God, Kei just wanted him to shut up. He wanted to shut him up.

When they'd first arrived, Kei had been relatively calm. He had followed his team into Sendai City Gymnasium and down the corridors until they reached the gym that would house their first game. They'd all changed, stretched, and begun warming up. The sounds of voices from other teams, squeaking shoes, and slamming balls echoed throughout the large structure. Sweat mingled with the smell of Air Salonpas, a gross but oddly comforting scent to Kei's sensitive nose. Then he'd picked up on another scent, one he couldn't quite identify but made the hairs on the back of his neck stand on end and his skin prickle like tiny ants were crawling all over him. It was disturbing and annoying and his already surly mood began to dip down into darker waters as his heart rate sped up.

"Tsukki? You okay?"
Kei had blinked, his increasingly vicious thoughts subsiding and he had looked at Yamaguchi, "I'm fine. Why do you ask?"

Yamaguchi had rubbed the back of his head nervously, his grey-brown eyes darting at Kei before they flickered to the floor beneath him and came back to meet Kei’s gold ones.

"You've been staring at the gym doors for ages and you had this weird look on your face. Plus, you were...I don't know...growling, maybe?"

"Growl-what? No I wasn't,” Kei huffed in annoyance, eyes narrowed at his friend. "I don't growl. I was only thinking, that's all." He hadn't even noticed he'd been staring at anything, but now he noticed teeth and nails and he inwardly swore. Kei took a deep breath, forcing his body to calm and the sudden invasion of anger to dissipate.

Yamaguchi had shrugged his shoulders and despite the fact he didn't look convinced, he’d let the matter drop before walking away toward the sidelines to grab his water bottle. Kei had taken a fleeting glance back at the entrance then followed him. He had taken another deep breath to calm his heartbeat and his nerves, but that smell had remained in the air and the weird feeling still crawled over his skin.

Once their game started it had been easier to ignore the constant buzzing at the back of his mind that something wasn't quite right. When the final had point landed and the excitement of victory dwindled after their first win, his team had headed out of the gym and toward their next destination. They’d only had a short time before their next match and they had to rest, eat, and stretch.

However, as soon as Kei had stepped through the gym doors he’d been hit with a wall of that unidentifiable scent. It had been thick and cloying, as if being drowned in a bog, surrounded by mildew and decay, and it felt like a slap in the face.

"WHAT THE HELL IS THAT GOD AWFUL SMELL!" He’d was yelling before he could stop. He’d covered his nose with one hand while he stretched and turned his head from side to side in a panicked manner, searching for its source. He had ignored the stares of his teammates, of other school's teams, of strangers, because the scent had been overwhelming and it had pissed him off. It had been everywhere , permeating the air, the fibers of the building, drenching the people around him, and sinking into his skin like a slick miasma. He had wanted to shower, to rub himself on every surface, to piss on everything until the place and the people were covered in something other than that stench. Most of all he had wanted to find the source of that funk and stomp it out.

"Tsukki?"

Kei had rounded on his friend, his eyes narrowed to the point of slits, his pupils blown so wide the gold of his irises were completely overwhelmed, and his teeth bared in a snarl behind the hand covering his nose.

Yamaguchi had backed away, his hands up in a placating manner, his grey-brown eyes wide with fear. "Tsuki, what smell?" His tone was calm, trying his best to soothe Kei.

Kei had looked from him to his teammates. They had all worn the same expression- fear. He could smell it on them, a subtle sour tang beneath the odor of the other.

"You-you don't smell that!?” He was a bit panicked, turning back to Yamaguchi, his voice low and
suspicious, and he was answered with a shake of shaggy brown hair.

"The only thing I smell is victory," One of his teammates had quipped nervously and was rewarded with hesitant laughter before they all had turned to continue on their way, choosing to ignore their moody teammate's outburst.

Yamaguchi had remained with Kei, his eyes searching his face with worry. Kei had to fight with all his will to regain his composure. It didn't happen often, losing his cool like that. Most of the time he could reign in his emotions, but on occasion they would spill over before he could get control. It was embarrassing and he blamed it on his weird body and its weird sensitivities.

"I'm fine," Kei forced his voice back to its neutral tone. The worst part had been having to continue to breathe the disgusting air and if he could have he would have left on the spot but he was stuck there at that dumb tournament with those dumb people and that dumb fucking smell that had made him want to strangle something.

Now he was sitting in this gym, in what seemed to be the source of that goddamn awful stench, watching that dark haired bastard of a setter, and grinding his teeth into dust as that static feeling buzzed across his skin. He’d given up trying to stop his traitorous body from reacting, instead doing his best to minimize exposure while he squirmed, agitated, in his seat.

Kei’s last game had been hell. Not the losing part. As previously mentioned, that wasn't a surprise. However, he'd been unable to concentrate the whole game, his eyes constantly going to the door of the gym they were playing in or to the north wall where other games were being held on the other side.

"MOVE FASTER!" Came flying up from the court as Kitagawa's ace missed another toss. Kei bit his tongue, surprised at the growl trying to escape his throat. Fuck, that damn setter was so stupid! He was ruining his own game.

When Kitagawa's entire line up abandoned the setter, Kei had enough. He rose and began heading toward the nearest exit, smirking. Served the asshole right.

"Tsukki, where are you going?" Yamaguchi yelled after him.

"Bathroom. I'll meet you at the bus." He stalked out before his frustration could show on his face. Except, he didn't head toward the bathroom. He did have to pee but he had an overwhelming urge to go somewhere...more private.

Kei found a service entrance and opened the door, sneaking a look around to make sure he wasn't seen. He stepped outside into the cold air, shivering and trying to be as inconspicuous as possible. He walked around the building until he found a mostly secluded area near a dumpster, and checking to make sure he was alone, Kei pulled his track pants down enough to free himself and emptied his bladder on the side of the building.

There was something incredibly satisfying about that action. Like he'd been pent up all day until now. The tension in his muscles- not the soreness from playing- began to flow out of him along with the stream of urine he covered the wall with. Kei smiled, just a curl of his lips that was more smirk than anything. He'd never done something like this, never felt the need to until that sickness stench filled his nose. In some remote part of his mind that still functioned logically, Kei knew what he was doing was stupid and indecent. However, Kei was, by now, mostly used to his own weird behaviors. It was just another piece of evidence in his growing list of behaviors and feelings that convinced him
he was not normal. Not entirely human.

He tucked himself back into his pants and breathed deep of his own scent. He was calm now, calmer than he'd been all day.

He returned to the bus instead of trying to find his way back inside just after everyone had boarded. He walked relaxed and composed and definitely looking every bit the cool fourteen year old boy, his hands in his pockets, headphones on his ears, and face a mask of disinterest, as usual. On board, he took a seat next to Yamaguchi who smiled at him shyly, his big eyes asking if he was alright. Kei grinned back at him before closing his own, leaning his head back on his seat while humming a few notes from the song he was listening to.

Chapter End Notes

Next:

Chapter 2: Kageyama Tobio

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Chapter 2: Kageyama Tobio

Middle School, Third Year, Summer

"If you're The King Who Rules the Court then I'm going to defeat you!"

Words spoken to him by a boy with orange hair and wearing a green and white uniform on a late summer afternoon, as a hot breeze caused leaves and other debris to dance around the tension between them. Those words rang in his ear as he walked away, leaving the boy (whose team his own had humiliated) standing on the steps to watch Tobio's retreating form, tears still streaking down his face from big, golden-brown eyes that glowed against the setting sun.

The boy, humorously dubbed the captain of that pathetic group of small teenagers, would have been only another fly to swat away on his climb to the top of the world, except he had imprinted himself into Tobio's mind. He was someone to watch because if that boy ever gained any real skill, if he had the right team, he could be, possibly, odds being slim, a formidable player. Tobio shivered beneath his track suit though the warm air of summer had his skin damp with sweat.

The boy with the wild orange hair and fierce determination burning in his bright honey eyes may be small but he could definitely jump.

~O~

Middle School, Third Year, Fall

Tobio would be the first to admit that his honor as an athlete meant little to him. Being a good sport or a team player was never much of a consideration because he knew his ability as a player overshadowed any need to be liked and respected. His abilities spoke for themselves and demanded respect, even if begrudgingly.

However, Tobio never expected to experience the feeling that accompanied his complete humiliation on the court during the last game he'd ever play for his middle school volleyball club. The moment he looked back to see his toss had been purposely ignored and his team standing, huddled several feet away and glaring at him, he was flooded with a wholly new emotion- shame.

Now, to be fair, it wasn't all his fault. Yes, he was a bit arrogant. Yes, he could be demanding. However, Tobio was like that only so much as it pertained to winning, something he was quite adamant about doing. If anything, Tobio's extreme aggression during the game could be blamed on the stress he'd been feeling the last few days.
It had started two days ago, he'd awoke feeling off and it had lasted most of the morning. It was a vague feeling of being...different. It was hard to identify specifically. All he knew was that a headache had started sometime around lunch and only increased throughout the afternoon until he had to excuse himself and leave volleyball practice early. It would have been an embarrassment to leave practice, of all things, but he was just so unwell. Tobio had gone home only to fall into his bed, exhausted, and slept through the night, well into the next morning and had been late to school.

He had awakened to dress in a rush and ran to school, skipping breakfast. The headache he'd felt the previous day had subsided to a dull ache but had not completely departed. He'd assumed that lack of food was the cause since he had last eaten at lunch the previous afternoon.

So on top of the headache was the hunger that was gnawing at his stomach, and once he took his seat in class the teacher indicated they would talk about his tardiness. Tobio was quite irritable.

Then the thing happened. He'd been walking to a lab class when one of the younger students collided with him, the papers she'd been carrying floating down like colorful, large snowflakes surrounding them. Tobio gave a loud uff as the air was knocked from his lungs before she bounced off his chest and flat on her rear end. Unfortunately, because Tobio was already in a pissy mood, he had snapped at the poor girl.

"IDIOT! WATCH WHERE THE FUCK YOU'RE GOING!"

Tobio could not manage to collect enough fucks to give as the younger girl shriveled in fear, her dark eyes shimmering with tears threatening to break along the edges. Even the smattering of random students in the halls that turned their horrified attention to them did nothing to deter his wrath. Instead, his blood pressure had risen as the girl sat sniveling on the floor amidst her papers and Tobio had to force himself to calm down before he slapped the shit out of her.

Surprised by the vehemence that seemed disproportionate to the situation, Tobio did an about face and headed toward the bathroom, determined to cool off, and leaving the poor girl to pick up her own mess. Once inside, he checked to make sure he was alone and began pacing back and forth, shaking his hands and rolling his neck, trying to lessen the tension in his muscles. A part of him knew his sudden outburst of anger was abnormal but his head had been hurting again and he was just so...agitated. In a last ditch effort to regain control Tobio went to the sink and plunged his hands under the tap and into ice cold water, pooling it in his hands then bringing it to his face. Like a miracle, his anger dissipated as if it was never there and his headache subsided. The bell for his next class rang and he quickly toweled off before heading to class walking as fast as he could without getting into trouble. He did not need to heap more onto his head after coming to school almost two hours late.

Tobio wasn't any better by the time school was over and practice began. He had maintained his composure after the incident in the hall, but once he stepped onto the court, despite the fact it was just practice, his composure began to slipping. Several times throughout practice he'd been called out by his coach to cool his head, but he was barely controlling the intense, aggressive need to compete- to win.

Tobio was never so glad when practice finally ended, the thought alien to his volleyball saturated psyche. The rest of his team left together to grab food and hang out but they did not invite him. He didn't care, truth be told. All he wanted to do was get home as quickly as possible and pretend this day never happened.

Tobio arrived home in record time, unlocking the door and slipping off his shoes in the entry. He
muttered an "I'm home" before slipping into the kitchen to warm up leftovers, then quietly headed to his room to watch volleyball videos on YouTube. He was alone, as he was most evenings since his parents worked late.

When he'd finished eating, Tobio set aside his empty plates, deciding to carry them down later and clean them before he went to bed. He grabbed a pair of old sweats and a t-shirt from his closet and headed to the bathroom in order to wash away the sweat from practice and his memories from that day. As he stood under the hot water, the shower head turned to its most powerful setting so it would massage the muscles in his back, Tobio reflected on his day and what could be causing such a downward spike in his mood. Most of his days occurred in the same order; wake up, practice, school, practice, go home, and the minor details rarely had any momentary significance. So what could be going on?

The hot water continued to pour over his worn out frame. The heat and steam collected within the shower walls creating an uncomfortable cocoon that was beginning to make his head fuzzy and the pressure of the water on his back became too rough, his pink skin too sensitive. Tobio turned to adjust the nozzle when the water hit his nipple sending a spark that started from the nerve endings in his chest right down between his legs. The surprise of the sensation caused him to bite down on his tongue before he let out a moan.

How long had it been since he touched himself? He thought back. It couldn't have been more than a week. Since puberty, Tobio discovered a healthy libido and was not shy about taking care of business when the urge took him. That could be it. His team were headed to their tournament the following day and that stress on top of ignoring his needs could be the contributing factor to his crazy mood swings.

Unfortunately, Tobio never gave in to self-gratification the night before a game. He'd read somewhere that a build up of testosterone could improve your performance so he'd made an effort to withhold any jerking off until after matches. If that was the problem then he'd just have to take care of it when his team had won the tournament. Simple as that.

Tobio willed his body to settle down and he finished his shower, drying off and dressing for bed. He turned off his light and crawled under the covers but as he lay there he knew sleep would not come, not for a long time anyway. He was too keyed up about the upcoming game. He rolled on to his back and reviewed drills and plays in his head until sleep finally took him.

~O~

The next morning started off fine. He woke and had breakfast with his parents. He got dressed, collected his gear, and with well-wishes from his mom and dad he headed out the door to meet his team. The bus ride was uneventful, he sat by himself in the back, and as usual, his teammates did everything possible to exclude him. It was no big deal, that just allowed him more time to get into the right mindset for the games ahead.

When they arrived, they unloaded their gear and headed indoors. That's when the trouble started. He wrinkled his nose as he immediately noticed the air within Sendai City Gymnasium carried an acrid tint that tingled his nose and put him on edge. He didn't know why but it was there, calling to him and making his skin crawl ever so slightly.
He followed his team through the corridors as they headed to the gym where their first game would be held. Amid whispers of awe and gossip they walked, Tobio becoming more and more unsettled and agitated. The acidic tang in the air grew until it burned his lungs, it was like trying to breathe through poison gas. He carefully watched his teammates and the people milling about, but they did not seem to be bothered by the smell at all. He didn't understand it, but he did know that wherever or whatever it was, it was quickly turning his agitation into anger. Tobio could not help it but by the time his first game began he was ready to beat someone to death.

His team smashed through their first opponents, luckily and despite Tobio's spiraling attitude. He knew he was being too hard on his teammates but in order to focus on the game and not wherever the fuck that rank smell was coming from, he had to vent his irritation somewhere- it just happened to be on the court. In his opinion, that was the best thing he could do. It seemed to work, too, since they won, and despite the attitude of his teammates, Tobio inwardly patted himself on the back for a job well done.

However, their next game quickly deteriorated into chaos. Partway through this first set the caustic stench poured into the gym. It took everything he had in him to focus instead of stopping mid-game to search for the origin. Regardless, the small hairs on the back of his neck rose as his temper took a sudden turn for the worse. His skin was veritably crawling with what felt like a thousand bugs and he could feel himself growling deep within his chest. At one point his teammate, Kindaichi Yūtarō, looked at him like he was from another planet, which wasn't all that different from the loathing look he usually gave Tobio. Tobio only yelled at him to move faster and jump higher.

Tobio was being swallowed up into a pit of rage and he could not stop himself from taking it out on his team, he couldn't do anything but scream and yell and demand more and more from the group of boys on his side of the net. That is until they quit on him. Until they purposefully let one of his tosses hit the ground and he was benched for the rest of the game.

In that moment, as the gym filled with whispers of his embarrassment, all his rage vanished and he was ashamed of himself. Yet, it only lasted for a moment and the overwhelming anger came back. The smell in the air was too sickening to ignore.

He sat on the bench, towel covering his head, deep, blue eyes searching for...something from the cover of his black fringe. Anything that would indicate where that fucking smell had come from. The smell that had ruined his last game.

His team did not win and they lost the tournament. Tobio wanted to cry.

~O~

The game had been over for a least a half hour. Their coach had insisted they stretch and relax before heading back, allowing the boys to quietly and tearfully ponder their mistakes, snack on whatever food they brought, or watch other schools finish their own games.

Tobio went to take a piss.

He had grabbed his stuff as soon as they had finished their bows and lectures and headed straight for
the bathroom. However, as he was stomping down one hall the pungent odor that had assaulted him earlier came back at full force. It had dissipated somewhat as the game continued, giving his nose and lungs a break after breathing in that foul vapor for so long. But then he headed toward the bathroom and it was there again, thick and suffocating and making his body react as if he'd just come face-to-face with an enemy. An enemy whose throat he wanted to wrap his hands around and squeeze until their lifeless body stilled in death.

Which was disturbing. Tobio shook his head trying to dislodge images of murder and blood. What the fuck was wrong with him today!?

He could not give too much thought to his increasingly violent temper because without his express permission, his feet were already following the trail of that smell. With nose in the air, Tobio followed it. He stalked it around corners, through halls, and down stairs until he came to a service entrance and stopped. By now his bladder was full and aching. God he had to pee!

Tobio didn’t know why he stood there or what this need was to keep following the smell but he did. Without checking to see if he was followed, Tobio pushed through the door and stepped into a service garage. The smell was still in the air though less smothering. He could still pick up up the trail, however, if he closed his eyes and focused, which was weird because he was starting to feel like a bloodhound.

The trail eventually led him out behind the building where a dirt lot covered a large portion of the area surrounded by an empty field of mowed grass and a line of trees further out. Tobio could see the tall buildings of the city beyond that. To his right, a service road wrapped around the building and led to the large parking lot out front. To his left was mostly empty space except for the large green dumpster that sat against the wall. Tobio sniffed the air again. Beneath the crisp scent of fall and dying leaves, that acidic scent wafted on the gentle currents. Tobio followed the scent as it brought him to a secluded spot beside a dumpster. On the wall was a dark patch of drying fluid and where the still damp the odor was concentrated. Tobio had the sudden urge to urinate on it.

This idea made Tobio chuckle in bewilderment even as he stared at the spot on the wall and the wet rocks beneath it. Why would he need to pee on a wall? Except, that's exactly what it was...a need. Primal and overwhelming.

Tobio clicked his tongue. As if he would do something so disgusting. He turned to head back and only got a few feet before stopping. For a moment he stood, rooted to the spot, his foot tapping in irritation while he chewed his lip nervously.

That smell was awful, impossible to ignore. It did something to him that made him want to react violently.

He hesitantly backed up to stand where he was, blue eyes locked on the damp spot, his emotions a mixture of rage, confusion, fear, and need.

What would it really hurt if he peed there? Besides the fact that it was publicly indecent. He did have to urinate after all, right? How much sense would it really make to trapse all the way back inside to find a bathroom when he could just do it right there? He could cover up that smell while he was at it. Cover it in his own scent and let whatever had left it know he was there, that this spot belonged to him.

Tobio looked around to make sure no one was watching. With shaking hands he pulled down his track pants to his thighs and released a steady stream of urine onto the wall like some sort of
perverted deviant. He should have been ashamed but he was in heaven. Not only was his bladder feeling the relief, but so were his shoulders and neck. It was so satisfying. Plus, the acrid scent was quickly being mixed and tamed by his own particular earthy aroma. He breathed deeply. So. Much. Better.

"Hey, you, punk! What the hell are you doing!?"

Tobio startled, caught with his pants around his ass and his dick in his hands. Oh FUCK! If he was caught and his coach found out he'd be in a world of trouble!

Tobio looked around to see a grown up coming toward him as he finished. He quickly pulled up his pants and grabbed his gear, taking off like a rocket and blowing passed the man before he could get a good enough look at Tobio to identify what school he belonged to. He rounded the building and headed toward the parking lot at full speed until his bus came into view. His team was not there yet but he forced his way through the doors and sunk down into one of the back seats hoping the man did not come after him.

He was asleep before his team climbed aboard.

~O~

By the time they returned home, Tobio was awake. As usual, his teammates had ignored him and he'd spent the remainder of the ride by himself in quiet contemplation.

Why had he suddenly found himself urinating on a wall for fuck's sake? What was with this ridiculous shift in his emotions, this uncontrollable fury that had boiled in his gut? These were questions that plagued him and he had no answers.

Once they arrived back at school and the bus had parked, they each filed out, silently unloading their belongings one by one. Tobio stuck around long enough for the short team meeting and the inevitable lecture from his coach on teamwork. There seemed to be more frustration toward him than toward the fact they lost their tournament, and as he trudged home in disappointment and shame, all Tobio could think was that he didn’t need them anyway.

It wasn't a long walk to his house but it seemed as if it took forever as he plodded along, lost in his thoughts. While his public act had eased some of the weird tension, something else was beginning to build beneath the surface.

He uttered, “I'm home,” into the dim light that seeped through the windows from the setting sun. Tobio pushed off his shoes and dropped his bag by the door and made his way to the kitchen, opening the fridge and looking for leftovers.

Bingo. There was a plastic tub with a sticky note attached:

Pork curry w/egg for your victory dinner.

Love mom
Tobio snorted his disappointment, the irony not lost on him. This week had been one of his worst and he didn't even have a victory in volleyball to ease the frustration that been building for weeks. His last game with his current school and it all went to shit, and most likely it was because of him.

Tobio thought briefly about slamming the door to the fridge and going straight to bed but he was too hungry and too dirty, so he pulled out the meal and placed it in the microwave. He set it for three minutes and flipped through his phone while he waited, bored and slightly depressed.

With another minute still to go on his food, he set his phone down, lost in his thoughts about that day's utter failure. Suddenly a flash of bright orange hair flitted through his mind. He shivered again, thinking of the unrefined power of the small middle schooler that had forced his way into his consciousness. He been there the whole time, tucked away for later consideration, but Tobio had found he cropped up now and again. Even four months after they'd met.

The microwave dinged, all images of short boys with orange hair flew out of his head, his dinner finally ready to be eaten. Tobio wolfed it down with barely a breath between bites before heading to his room with his gym bag. He planned to shower and sorted out his dirty uniform and other clothes to toss into the wash on his way. In the shower he set the temp and waited while the water heated, busyng himself by making sure he had all his needed items. Stepping under hot water was the first moment that day he felt normal. The hot water ran down his tired body taking with it his momentary worries and leaving him feeling calm.

That's when the recognizable tugging in his lower gut started. The familiar heat of hormones that had been put on hold until the right time, now finding an opening in his otherwise stalwart will, rising up to remind him that there were some needs he had yet to attend to.

Tobio had the sort of self-control (the majority of the time) that most adults would envy. Because of his intense passion for volleyball, he'd learned early on that to be good at it, not only did you have to practice all the time, but disciplining your body had to extend to all areas of your life. That included sexual needs, another lesson learned when he grown aware of things of that nature. That being said, Tobio never succumbed to desires by sheer need but only by choice.

At least, that had been the way it went for the last few years. Now that Tobio stood in the shower, hard-on obvious and aching, his needs became overwhelming. However, perhaps that was due to lack of attention, so without giving it much consideration, Tobio too care of business and finished his shower.

Yet, his problem did not stop there. Within minutes of returning to his room, that same heat began to build in him again. For a moment he chuckled at himself, thinking that he must have really been neglectful, so he once again jerked off, this time with the help of some lotion instead of hot water. Unfortunately, getting off wasn't so easy. Pleasureable, sure, but frustrating. When he finally managed to reach his climax, he groaned in irritation at the mess he'd made, gathering his dirty sheets and took another quicker shower.

But it happened again. This time, Tobio fought it. And fought it. He fought it until he was an aching, angry mess before finally giving in and relieving himself. After the build up it was quicker but intense, leaving him gasping for air and dehydrated for loss of fluids. Tobio managed to make it to his kitchen for a glass of milk before the need hit him again, the need to fuck himself nearly bringing to his knees, panting like a dog in heat, and actually beginning to get scared. He didn't understand what was happening to him, the desire to masturbate should not be this...severe. He knew this but there he was, on the kitchen floor, pants around his ankles and moaning like a whore as he stroked himself.
When he’d orgasmed and lay on the floor, exhausted and embarrassed, until he could return to his senses, then he cleaned up the mess he’d made. Afterward he grabbed a few bottles of water and headed back to his room. He could already feel the wave coming for him again.

Tobio wasn't much for thinking about anything that didn't have to do with his favorite sport and he wasn't going to start now. Despite his increasing worry surrounding his wayward sex drive, Tobio decided it wouldn't hurt to wait until whatever this was to pass to dig deeper into its mysteries.

As it was, this “whatever” wouldn't pass for another day and a half.

~O~

Tobio woke with the sun warming his face on the third day after marathoning a jerk off session that left him drained and exhausted. For the life of him he still could not figure out why his hormones had gotten away from him, he usually had better control.

Tobio thought about these things and the weirdness of the situation only until his belly rumbled with hunger. Pushing himself stiffly from his bed and grimacing at the mess he’d made, Tobio searched for clean clothes to put on, he’d shower later after he filled his stomach. Then he slogged to the kitchen, weak with hunger, to fix himself something to eat.

“M-om?” Tobio called down the silent halls of his house, his voice cracking from overuse. When his mother didn’t answer he cleared his throat, wincing at the raw feeling, and called for his father.

“Dad?” Everything was quiet except for the normal whines and groans of his home.Tobio shrugged and headed into the kitchen where he found a note left by his mother stuck to the fridge with a volleyball shaped magnet that had googly eyes and a derpy smile.

_Tobio, we've missed you these last few days._

_The school also called to say you missed a day of class, hope everything is well._

_Love, mom and dad._

His family were very much private individuals, his parents worked a lot, and he was often left to his own devices, so communication via notes was not an unusual occurrence in the Kageyama household. That may have seemed odd to some, but Tobio's parents were never too worried about their son being alone since he rarely got into much trouble. He was too focused on his sport to care about normal teenage activities and his introverted nature meant he had few if any friends.

His thoughts remained on the note, not quite following its contents. The last few days had been a blur of activity and he’d lost all sense of time passing until he emerged from his room like a moth escaping its cocoon. Tobio poured himself a large glass of milk before scanning the calendar that
hung in the kitchen. He sifted through the information, color coded for appointments and meetings and such things, trying to determine what day it was and how long he'd been out of it.

Tobio's eyes went wide as he realized how much time had passed and that he'd crawled out of his room on a Thursday, halfway through a school day. He nearly jumped out of his skin when the shrill sound of the phone broke through the quiet of the house and he clutched his chest, trying to calm his racing heart as he answered the phone, setting his milk on the countertop as he went.

"Kageyama household, how can I help you."

There was chuckling on the other end he quickly identified as his mother.

"Tobio, you sound like a secretary when you answer the phone."

He sighed and grinned slightly, his mother was one of the single people on the planet that could pull a genuine smile from him.

"Hm," he replied in usual diffidence.

"I was calling to check in on you. The school called again to say you missed and I was worried you were sick. Everything okay?"

Tobio fidgeted with the hem of his t-shirt, shifting from one foot to another, glad his mom wasn't around to see his embarrassment, heat radiating off his face.

"I-I'm okay."

"Were you sick? Why did you miss two days of school? You're grades are atrocious enough without missing classes."

He sighed again, guilt flooding him, but what could he say? 'Sorry mom, I was busy playing with myself'? He had a feeling that wouldn't go down well.

"Tobio?"

He realized he'd been quiet too long. He hated lying to his mother but there wasn't much he could do so he replied, "Sorry. Yeah, I was sick but I'm better now. I'll go to school tomorrow."

"Okay, Little Hero, I'll let the school know. Make sure you rest and drink plenty of fluids."

"Okay," his tone resigned and his complexion flushing at the ridiculous nickname his mother refused to give up.

"How did your tournament go?"

"Oh, we, uh, we lost."

"Oh, I'm sorry Tobio. I know how much winning meant to you. I have to go but we will talk later, okay? You're dad and I will be home this evening so we will have dinner together."

"Okay."

She chuckled. He knew it was because he wasn't the most verbose character, even with his parents.
"I love you. Take care of yourself."

"I love you too, mom. Bye." He hung up and retrieved his glass of milk as he returned to the kitchen. Draining the last of it, he refilled his glass and grabbed some snacks, then headed to his room. All thoughts of his little hiatus faded into the background and quite forgotten as his brain turned toward more important matters such as watching volleyball videos until his parents came home to feed him.

~O~

The following month the weather started getting colder and Tobio found himself the victim of another hormonal outburst. This time he only missed one day of school. The need to masturbate came upon him swiftly in the evening after school ended, the constant desire crippling him for only a little over twenty-four hours. The episode was not as intense as the first, though still severe, but he was able to cover his ass and misdirect his parents’ curiosity. When he emerged from his room late the following evening, he convinced them he hadn’t been feeling well. His parents were understandably worried since he was rarely sick so he was made to visit his doctor. Tobio had to admit he was also distraught, he was pretty sure masturbating was not supposed to happen the way it did for him.

He'd been seeing his doctor once every few months since he could remember because of some blood disorder he inherited. It was an inconvenience but not too troublesome. Mostly all they did was take blood, record his heart rate, and sometimes made him lie real still as he was passed through the MRI machine.

Tobio's mother made him an early appointment, he hadn't been due to see the doctor for another few weeks but she hadn't wanted him to wait in case something was wrong. He had gone with little to no objection, secretly agreeing that seeing the doctor about his...problem was for the best.

Tobio sat down with the nurse, Isaki, as she began the usual walk through of doctors checks and the litany of questions that happen at every visit.

"You've grown, that's to be expected. You're taller than me even and you're quite stocky, must be all that physical activity."

Tobio listened silently, his expression bland while his heart skipped from anxiety.

"Do you smoke or drink?"

The implication that he would even consider such moronic behavior showed on his face.

"No. Wouldn't be good for playing."

Isaki chuckled, "Of course not. What about your parents?"

Tobio shrugged, he never paid much attention to what his parents did, "My dad smokes. I don't know if they drink."

Isaki continued to type into the computer as she asked the questions with little awareness of his
nervousness.

"Are you sexually active?"

Tobio choked on his saliva and his whole face turning a deep crimson.

"I'll take that as a no," She stated, observing him momentarily before turning her brown eyes back to the computer, a small grin pulling the corners of her mouth. Tobio would be offended that she assumed he was still a virgin if he wasn't already offended by the question. Of course he was still a virgin but that wasn't the point.

"Anything of note we should know?" The unstated question of why the early appointment hanging in the air. Tobio knew he would be coming in to talk about the past few months and his unrestrained sex drive, that didn't mean he was any more comfortable talking about it.

He sat on the examination table fidgeting with the hem of his jeans, eyes downcast, face still red, and wishing his mother could have come to answer these stupidly embarrassing questions. Actually, no, he did not want his mother there. The thought of her explaining Tobio's excessive masturbation tendencies made him want to throw himself into moving traffic. Still, how was he even supposed begin a conversation of this nature? How did one explain that they are overcome by a wave of horniness once a month that resulted in hours upon hours of isolation while they go through multiple boxes of Kleenex, only to reemerge emptied of fluids and vitamins? If the Universe was kinder it would open up the ground and swallow Tobio whole, thereby exempting him from all present humiliating conversations.

Tobio glanced at the Isaki who sat silently, her fingers poised over the computer keys, and big, brown eyes observing him with cool regard. He looked away quickly and sighed, brow furrowing further and face deepening in color. He wasn't good with people anyway, so this sensitive and private topic only exacerbated his anxiety. Suddenly Tobio felt a light hand on his knee and he looked down at the delicate fingertips.

"Tobio, you don't have to be scared."

"I'm not scared.,” he snapped, his head whipping up so his blue eyes could fixate on hers. Isaki's hand drew back slightly in wariness, her eyes widening, and placating smile freezing on her face. "Sorry,” he mumbled, ducking his head in shame.

"It's okay, Tobio. Whatever it is, you know that everything you say is doctor/patient privilege, right? Tobio nodded slowly, eyes still downcast.

Isaki continued, "So why don't you tell me what's happened and I'll see if I can't help you."

Tobio nodded again, sighing in defeat. It was what he was there for, right?

When he did speak, the words came out in a low rush, jumbled together and unintelligible.

"I'm sorry, Tobio, I didn't quite catch that,” Isaki leaned toward him, her face screwed up in concentration.

Tobio took a deep breath and on his exhale he started again, "I masturbate too much." He closed his eyes, refusing to look at the Isaki and waited with bated breath for laughter or some sort of mocking. His face was on fire, so overcome with embarrassment he was. Yet, instead of ridicule, all he heard was the tapping of keys and he chanced a look at the nurse, one eye opening cautiously. Isaki was
busy at the computer, presumably documenting his answer.

"Tobio, can you tell me what you mean by 'too much'?

Tobio jumped at the sudden question. His eyes darted around the room as he fought with the humiliation he felt having to disclose such personal information.

"Uh, the first time it was two to three days. Last month it was only one,” he finally manages to choke out.

"That doesn't seem like much, Tobio. Two to three days a month is actually way less than the average teenage male." As she educated Tobio she let slip a small, teasing smile at the nervous teenager on the table.

Tobio cleared his throat. "In a row,” he reluctantly added.

Isaki raised an eyebrow and opened her mouth to say something but Tobio interrupted her, determined to get it all out now before his rapid heart rate killed him, "Non-stop. It's happened the last two months."

A new look washed over Isaki's face and she clamped her mouth shut, full lips pulled it into a tight line as her brows furrowed. This change in attitude only served to increase Tobio's trepidation. Was something terribly wrong with him? Was he going lose his dick!?

"Was this accompanied by a milky discharge from your anus?"

The look Tobio gave her could only be described as irate horror. What the ever living fuck kind of question was that!?

"NO!” He shouted at her but the Isaki only continued to type, unfazed. "Tobio, were these periods accompanied by an increase in aggression?"

"I don't understand."

"Were you more irritable surrounding the incidents than at any other time?"

"...Y-es.” Now he was thoroughly confused. He tilted his head, blue eyes narrowed with suspicion.

Isaki glanced at him and gave him a reassuring smile, "Tobio, tell me about your senses."

"My what?"

"Your senses- you know, sight smell, touch, taste." Her smile, still reassuring, was becoming a little strained.

Tobio only shrugged. "I haven't paid much attention."

Isaki looked at him, incredulous, "So you haven't noticed an increase in sensitivity in any of them?"

Tobio considered the question carefully. Could he identify a change in his senses? He shook his head at the Isaki. She looked back at him, baffled by his response.

"So, you can't tell if you hear better or see farther? Like, maybe hear conversations clearly in other
rooms or see objects from farther off? Maybe smell things others can't?"

At that, Tobio's eyes lit up, "I can't...really say anything about hearing or seeing, I never really paid attention. But the smelling, there was this one time I smelled something funny and no one else seemed to notice."

Isaki smiled genuinely this time and Tobio relaxed. She returned to her computer and resumed typing.

"Can you describe that experience?"

"Uh," he began, face screwing up in thought as he looked back on that day at the tournament, "well, it was at my last game. There was this really...spicy smell. It was really gross and made me feel like I was breathing acid."

"Okay, good."

She continued to type for what felt like forever without looking at him or saying anything and Tobio wondered what could have been 'good' about that experience.

"Anything else? How did you feel about it?"

Tobio blinked at her sudden inquiry before answering, "I felt like I was breathing acid." Sometimes it was like talking to a wall with these people.

Isaki chuckled, shaking her head, "I meant emotionally, Tobio."

He felt his face heat up again, "Sorry. Uh, I guess I was irritated?"

She raised her eyebrow at him again and he sighed, "Uh, I guess I got mad. I mean, it was horrible. Like, someone had done it on purpose and I wanted to, um..." He didn’t want to finish that thought, afraid of what the Isaki would think of him considering how violent he had felt at the time.

"It's okay, Tobio. You can be honest."

He inhaled deeply, "I was really angry and wanted to hurt whoever made it. I mean really hurt them. It was horrible." He watched her, challenging her words of non-judgement. Isaki only nodded, her brown eyes intense and interested in every word.

"Did you? Hurt anyone, I mean?"

"No!" He hates the way he sounds like he’s pleading but he doesn’t want people to think he’d actually hurt someone on purpose, no matter how angry he’d been. "I swear I only followed the smell."

"You did? What did you find?"

"Nothing, really. I ended up outside and found a wet spot where the smell seemed to come from. But that was all." Tobio had almost forgotten what he had done when it had occurred and just like the embarrassing topic of his masturbation activities, he was ashamed of his behavior. He shut his mouth and looked at the wall. Isaki, it seemed, did not believe him, pushing for further explanation.

"So, nothing else happened? You didn't do anything?"
Tobio shook his head weakly and glanced at Isaki. He really wished this visit would end, it had been the most uncomfortable doctor's visit of his life.

The nurse gazed at him, disbelief blatant on her face, "Tobio..."

His shoulders curled up as he fidgeted in his lap guiltily.

"What did you do?"

"I peed on it."

There. Just rip it off like a band-aid and get it over with. He really wanted to leave but he still had no answers and they had not exactly helped him with the reason he'd come here.

"You...urinated...on it? The wet spot in the wall?" Isaki continued to press him.

Tobio covered his face with his hands and nodded.

"Why?" Isaki tilted her head, genuine curiosity in her tone.

He groaned, his voice strained and muffled, “What the hell does this have to do with why I came in the first place?” He had reached his limit with the amount of humiliation one person could accept in the course of an hour. He glared at Isaki then, his irritation overcoming his embarrassment and his expression settling into his usual grimace.

Isaki only sighed, "That's okay. I think I'm finished for now. If you could only wait a few minutes more, I will tell the doctor your ready for him."

Tobio nodded, reluctantly, and Isaki rose from her seat, slipping out the door.

~O~

“Doctor Uemura, Patient 3 is ready for you."

“Thank you, Isaki-san. Any changes?”

“I believe the boy has experienced rut. He described two incidents so far."

“Two? Interesting. He's just now mentioning them?"

“Yes sir. Also, he says his sensory input has not changed. Well, except for smell."

“What do you mean?"

“I asked him if he noticed any increases in sensory experiences and he could not identify any."

“But for smell."

“Yes, sir. He did say that he came across an odor that was, and I quote, "Like breathing acid"."

“Did anything happen.”
“Only that it made him feel violently angry and he followed the odor only to urinate on it.”

“It?”

“Yes, it turned out to be some sort of wet spot on a wall.”

“...Marking.”

“I’m sorry, sir?”

“Marking. Territory. I’d bet my life he came in contact with our other Alpha and they marked territory. Fascinating.”

“...Yes, Doctor.”

“Yet, no other increase in sensory input?”

“No, sir.”

“That is...unusual. I will talk to him now and in the meantime, get him scheduled for more tests. Let’s focus on sensory input. Maybe he just hasn’t noticed.”

“...Is that even possible, sir?”

“Depends on the person, I would think. We have to remember that he has had little to no exposure to others of his kind. In the available research, when the Beta-gene was more prevalent and active, Alphas and Omegas would be surrounded by their own kind and would be more aware of the changes that come with their presentation. I would assume that without other's influence, some ignorance would be justified.”

“But the changes are immense, Dr. Uemura. Is it really possible for them to go unnoticed?”

“If they happen gradually, yes. It would seem normal to the person presenting.”

“That makes sense, sir. Is there anything else?”

“Yes, let’s draw some blood and run tests for pheromone levels.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Thank you, Isaki-san.”

“Your welcome, Doctor.”

~O~

Tobio left the office that day never feeling so relieved to be as far away as possible from the hospital,
holding an appointment card for another visit the following week for more tests. He didn't understand why they were so interested in any of these ridiculous occurrences. Could they not just give him a pill or something?

Instead, amid tube after tube of blood being drawn, blood pressure recordings, and amid chatter among the offices and what not, Tobio only got advice to drink more water and make sure he ate when it happened again.

Happened again.

They expected it to happen...again. In fact, he'd been told to expect it monthly from here on out. Dr. Uemura had told him to think of it as teenage hormones times ten except condensed into a few days once a month. He said it sort of resembled the mating season of certain animals. Seriously!? He'd told Tobio that it was a normal side effect of his disorder and he had nothing to worry about. Easy for him to say, he wasn't going to miss school on a regular monthly basis based on an unquenchable urge to mate. Unhelpful asshole.

Tobio sighed. He really didn't need this, exams were coming up and he was banking on a recommendation to Shiratorizawa. School would be over soon enough and he'd have to prepare for his high school debut.

A chill fall breeze swept across the Miyagi Prefecture bringing with it the smell of change. However, Tobio was too engaged in thoughts of high school championships to notice the difference.

Chapter End Notes

Next:

Chapter 3: Fate or Influence

If you like it so far, please Kudos and/or comment.
"Director Kida, here is the latest report on the patients."

Director Kida nodded toward his desk without looking up from his work as his assistant, Uchikoshi Fujio, set down the files.

"Anything of note?" Kida continued to tap on his keyboard, looking at data and making notes on a notepad.

"It appears that Patient 3 has presented as an Alpha, he's entered at least two ruts so far."

Kida chuckled, "That's a given. I would have been shocked otherwise. That all?"

"No, sir."

Kida glanced at his assistant, noticing the change in his voice. "Well?" He asked, returning to his work while anticipation was building within him.

"Our two Alphas may have come across one another."

Kida stopped typing and sat back, tilting his head to gaze at Uchikoshi. "That right?" So it was beginning.

Uchikoshi pushed up his glasses and continued, "It seems they attended the same sports tournament. Patient 3 reported an acrid odor resulting in increased aggression and the need to mark territory."

Kida's eyes flashed with excitement. This was great! The research available was very sparse, only describing some very observable phenomena. However, experiencing life as it happened, being apart of history, was exhilarating in a way that only researchers could appreciate. Shit! This was the biggest news yet!

"Marking, huh? Did they come face to face? Wait! Never mind, we would have heard about it. Sounds like they wouldn't get along."

Uchikoshi looked at him, doubtful, "How do you come to that conclusion? The reports still have too little information to form a viable opinion."

Kida laughed. His assistant was good at his job, and loyal, some of the reasons he kept him around. They'd worked together for years and Kida trusted him and his opinions more than any other. He was intelligent and thorough but sometimes short sighted. He was too often too rigid to think outside the box. He was a great assistant but could never be a proper researcher.
"My dear, man, you stated the patient experienced an increase in aggression when he scented the other Alpha in his neighborhood, did you not?"

Uchikoshi nodded.

"If we compare them to the common canine, not all are aggressive when they scent another in their territory. They may still mark but that doesn't always accompany defensive behavior. However, this patient experienced a raised state of...alarm."

"That...makes sense," Uchikoshi yielded, nodding at his boss who gazed back at him with smug satisfaction.

"Also..." Director Kida continued, excitement now evident in his demeanor, "Have you read Patient 2's file? The boy is positively unpleasant. Would you really assume that he and Patient 3 would end up best buddies?"

Uchikoshi chuckled, "I guess you're right on that point."

"Of course I am," Kida grinned and returned to his work.

Uchikoshi assumed their impromptu meeting was finished and headed toward the door. Just as his hand touched the metal handle, Director Kida stopped him.

"I have a thought."

"Yes, Director?" Uchikoshi turned to his boss, eyebrows raised in expectation. Kida sat back in his office chair and rested chin on steepled fingers and for a moment all was quiet in the Director's office. The sun was slanting in through the windows, rays dispersed by blinds that had been partially closed to block out most of the late fall light. It made the Director a mysterious figure, shrouded in shadow.

"What are their plans for high school?"

"I assume you mean all three? We don't know. It's still early, they would still be, in what...?" Uchikoshi thought for a moment, "Their second semester?"

"Hmm..." Kida was thoughtful, eyes staring darkly at his computer screen as the sun set slowly outside. "Find out, will you? Don't you think it would be interesting if they went to the same school."

"Director, I thought we were going to observe natural progression?"

Kido chuckled, "Natural is a subjective term, Uchikoshi. Sometimes life needs a light nudge."

Uchikoshi bowed his head and walked out of the office leaving the director to contemplate this latest news. Kida was right, of course. How much of life was nature and nurture? The age old debate between them ran deep but anyone serious enough knew that life was a mixture of the two. And for discoveries to happen in big ways, sometimes fate needed a little help.

"Alright, our little Omega. Time to make your appearance."

Kida's giddy smile could have rivaled a child on Christmas.
Chapter End Notes

Next:

Chapter 4: Convergence

Kudos/comments welcome.
Chapter Notes

Revised 12/25/17

See the end of the chapter for more notes

High School, First Year, Spring

Takeda Ittetsu was at his desk finishing gathering his paperwork (a stack of essays from his students on some obscure poet from fuck knows when about giant wolves and angry primitives). Takeda sighed and rubbed the spot between his eyes under the bridge of his glasses. Honestly, you take one course in a subject based purely out of curiosity and they decide you're a goddamned expert on it. He did not sign up for this shit.

It had been a grueling week preparing for the semester to start and his first few days in the classroom had proven that by the end of it, he may shoot someone. Or himself.

Teenagers suck.

Takeda had a headache, he was hungry, and he needed a beer. A lot of them. When he wasn't preparing lesson plans he'd been calling various schools, trying- and failing- to rope someone into practicing with the shit team from the backwater fucking high school he'd been forced to work at. No one was interested in a has been "powerhouse" volleyball team. If he cared at all he'd be offended. Instead, he was only irritated that his supervisors couldn't bring themselves to influence a few people and make his life slightly more bearable. But noooo.

"We cannot have a presence in this. You are on your own down there so you need to play the part and watch."

Takeda hated children. At any age. They were noisy, unpredictable, and assholes most of the time. Never mind he used to be one, like, ten years ago, but then, ten years was a long time. If he was a smart man, he would have turned this assignment down and put his research talents to better use. Except he wasn't smart...well he was, but his curiosity had gotten the better of him once the specifics of the objective had been explained.

Watch the kids, observe, and report.

Okay, easy enough, and working as a teacher was the best way to do so up close. But why they couldn't have found him a position as a science teacher, he did not know. Maybe they just hated him.

Takeda completed packing and locked up the teacher's office, then headed down the dark hall. The sun had set not long ago, covering everything in shadow and quiet. He yawned and rubbed an eye. Maybe he'd skip the beer and grading papers and just sink into his bed.

Okay, so maybe not skip the beer. Or food, he definitely needed food.

Takeda walked by one of the windows that viewed a small field bordered on one side by a fence.
Movement beneath one of the lamp posts caught his eye and he stopped to observe the activity.

Out on the grass a tall, dark haired teen twirled a volleyball ball between large hands before tossing it into the air and slapping it with one hand, sending it flying across the field. Takeda's eyes followed the trajectory of the ball where a smaller, red haired boy waited, arms splayed out to his sides and knees bent as his sharp eyes waited for contact. When the ball finally reached the boy, his arms came together and swung up, hitting it awkwardly which resulted in him being smacked in the face before it flew off at an angle. Takeda snickered.

What a fuck up! Seriously, what the hell was that even supposed to be? Even with his limited knowledge of the sport, Takeda knew that was a dumb move. He sighed.

So these two where two-thirds of the subjects of his observation. Figures. One carried the expression of a permanent scowl, the other...well he was obviously "special". Takeda snorted at his own wit.

He was about to move on when another movement caught his eye near the ginger. Coming up behind the boy were two other teens. Both were tall but one was above average for a fifteen year old male. Like, freakishly so. He had blonde hair and wore white headphones around his neck. The two newcomers stopped before the others, and an exchange took place. An argument, by the looks of it.

Takeda could not hear their conversation but their body language gave him all the context he needed. The blonde carried himself with a lazy, aloofness and an infuriating smirk upon his lips. The raven was stiff, body rigid with anger, hate brimming from his expression. It seemed as if a physical altercation was going to break out when moments after meeting, the dark haired boy grabbed the tall blonde by his shirt front.

Without much preamble, Takeda slid the window open and dug into his bag, pulling out his military issued tranquilizer gun loaded with a low-grade sedative. He aimed for the raven, though he didn't care if he got him or the blonde as long as one was knocked out. He'd deal with the others afterward. Takeda breathed to steady his hands and rested his finger just above the trigger, waiting to see if the dark haired Alpha would attack before making his move. He didn't want unnecessary actions if they could be avoided.

The third boy, the wild haired ginger, bounced around the two, eyes wide like a child and wary, as if he were wrangling two predators that could lash out at any moment.

Both boys paused for a moment and looked at the redhead before the dark haired kid released the blonde. Takeda lowered his arms. When it seemed as if the tension had passed, he replaced his weapon and slid the window closed.

The whole exchange lasted less than five minutes in which Takeda was actually impressed when the smallest of the foursome jumped up like a fucking kangaroo to grab the volleyball the blonde had absconded and tossed in a large hand. Then they separated, the blonde and his shadow departing and the other two resuming their impromptu practice.

Takeda grunted in disappointment. The whole thing had been relatively anti-climatic. So, sure, the smaller had yet to actually present, but the two Alphas on the field could have at least shed some blood and made Takeda's day a little less boring.

Whatever, it was still early, and things were just beginning.

Takeda walked out of the entrance of the school and sighed. He supposed he ought to stop by that
small shop on the way to his flat and grab some brew. Maybe he could convince the cute shopkeeper to coach the team so he wouldn't have to. It would make his life a whole hell of a lot easier.

~O~

The day before...

It was there, that familiar scent. It wafted through the halls and lingered in the air all day. It stank again like rotting wood and swamps and sadness. It covered Kei as it did the day of the competition, sinking him in death and drowning him in bitterness. He had to grind his teeth to keep his composure and by the end of the day his jaw hurt and his teeth ached, but it was better than wolfing out (a term he not so affectionately dubbed the weird growth of teeth and nails). When he wasn't forced to pay attention in class he wore his headphones, drowning out the boiling rage that sat in his belly, otherwise he'd lash out, most likely at Yamaguchi and his best friend didn't deserve that.

He'd learned, the day of the tournament, that no one else notice the stink so this time, even if he'd been unprepared for the onslaught, he kept his mouth shut and suffered through it on his own.

Several times throughout the day, Yamaguchi had asked him if everything was alright and Kei had forced himself to look less sour than he felt to placate Yamaguchi and stem the tide of questions that would follow the truth. But his skin was buzzing again, making him fidget. He needed to find the source of that yuck and stomp it out for good.

Kei sighed. He was gonna pee on a wall again, he just knew it. He already felt the desire to claim the spot, the school grounds, as his own. For what reason, he couldn't fathom. The only answers he ever got from any of the research he did on his odd behaviors, his strange...symptoms, referred to dog training, and once, lycanthropy, which was hysterical and not in the haha funny way. Hence the phrase “wolfing out”.

Kei sighed and looked at the clock again. School was almost over and all he wanted to do was vacate the building at high speed and go home where he could blockade himself in his room where it was safe and familiar and his.

Unfortunately, before he could officially leave he had to find the volleyball club captain and apply for membership. Well, technically, he didn't have to do it but Yamaguchi was practically bouncing in his seat from the excitement of possibly playing for a high school team and would never let him leave without stopping by first.

If Kei was honest with himself he'd admit to feeling the same way, but at that moment it was the last thing he wanted. Even so, the bell rang and their teacher finally dismissed them and he gathered his things, waiting on Yamaguchi. When they were both ready, they walked out of class and headed toward the third year floor to find the captain named Sawamura Daichi.

Kei and Yamaguchi lazily traversed the halls, Yamaguchi joyfully jabbering about their first day of school, their teachers, and whatever else his happy ass could come up with. Making it to their destination, they approached a random third year in order to ascertain the whereabouts of said captain.

"Are you looking for me?" Came a deep voice from their left before they had even received an
Turning, they came face-to-face with a dark-haired third year of medium height and a broad build. He was standing with another third year with silver-dyed hair and a beauty mark near his left eye.

"We want to apply for the volleyball club," Yamaguchi cheerfully offered.

The captain observed them both for a moment, expression impassive.

"What are your names?" The silver haired third year spoke up.

"I'm Yamaguchi Tadashi and he's Tsukishima Kei," Yamaguchi cheerfully replied, thumbing toward himself and Kei.

"You're really tall," The captain mused, a hungry look in his eyes as he looked Kei up and down. One could only assume he was thinking of the advantage Kei would give their team. "How tall are you?"

"188cm," Kei's bored tone offered.

"Hm," The captain and the silver third year looked impressed. "What position do you two play?"

"We're both middle blockers," Yamaguchi proudly exclaimed.

"Well, I'm Sawamura Daichi, Captain of the team. You can call me Diachi. This is my Vice," he introduced himself and gestured at the silver teen, "Sugawara Kōshi."

"Nice to meet you. You can call me Suga."

"Nice to meet you," Kei and Yamaguchi greeted and both bowed, well Kei merely nodded.

Diachi dug around in his bag and pulled out a couple of forms. "Can you fill these out real quick?" Both first years nodded.

Within minutes they had completed the paperwork and handed them back. "Okay, we have to run and start practice. Stop by the gym at some point and we will introduce you," Daichi suggested with a polite smile and dismissing tone.

Kei and Yamaguchi bowed and thanked them, turning to leave.

~O~

Suga looked at his captain, "That makes four recruits."

"Hm," Diachi replied absently, lost in thought.

Suga glanced at Daich, his soft expression bunching up in concern, "What's up, Diachi?"

Diachi continued to stare after the two tall teens and did not answer for a moment. When he did, he
asked in a thoughtful manner, "Did you get a weird vibe from that Tsukishima kid?"

Suga only looked at him and shrugged, this was high school, lots of people were weird.

"No more than usual, why?"

Diachi just shook his head, “Never mind. Let's go before they think we're not coming.” He didn't want to say it, but something was off about that tall, blonde teen. Something he couldn't put his finger on. "I hope they're not gonna give us trouble,” Diachi worried as they headed toward the gym.

Suga chuckled, “It wouldn't be any worse than what we've dealt with before.”

Diachi wasn't so sure about that.

~O~

The next afternoon Kei and Yamaguchi stood at the gym doors. The day had been the same for Kei, stressful and gritting. The same odor that had permeated the school was back again so he'd spent the day silently fuming and wanting to go home. However, they needed to stop by practice as the captain had suggested, so Kei had kept his mouth shut and temper under control, resigning himself to his fate.

Squeaking shoes and balls slapping hard floors punctuated by calls poured from the gym. Yamaguchi took a hesitant peek inside as he switched out his shoes. Kei copied his actions, albeit slower and with reluctance. Once they stepped inside they stood off on the sidelines to watch. The players were practicing serves at the moment but, one by one, stopped when they noticed the Kei and Yamaguchi standing by.

Daichi was the first to break up the line and trotted over to them. He was already sweating from the activity and his cheeks were flushed from exercise but that didn't retract from his already intimidating presence. Yamaguchi stood next to Kei and fidgeted with the strap on his bag in nervous anticipation while Kei stood straight with his hands in his pockets, watching the captain approach with little expression on his face.

"Thanks for stopping by,” Daichi greeted as he came to a halt before them. His eyes raked over Kei again but his face gave nothing away. "We don't usually start first years until the second week but at least I can introduce you.”

He turned and pointed toward the five teens waiting behind him, "You already know Suga."

Suga waved, smiling big and excited.

"The bald idiot making dumb faces is Tanaka Ryūnosuke a second year and wing spiker."

"Daichi, c'mon!” Tanaka yelled, offended at being described as bald and an idiot. "You can call me Tanaka-Senpai,” he told the two first years while he tilted his head and tried to make intimidating faces at them. Suga punched him in the side and told him to quit it, making Kei snort in amusement. The look of utter betrayal Tanaka gave Suga was comically exaggerated. Daichi just rolled his eyes, apparently he was used to this sort of behavior.
"That's Ennoshita Chikara, second year and wing spiker, the captain continued. Ennoshita waved but said nothing else.

Daichi gestured at another shaved teen, "Narita Kazuhito, second year middle blocker."

Narita gave them a small bow, "Narita is fine."

"And that's Kinnoshita Hisashi, second year wing spiker."

He stood where he was, his gaze leveled at some point on the far side of the gym. He didn’t say anything, either.

Daichi returned his attention to Kei and his friend. "That's about it," he finished but Kei noticed something about his expression and a light bitter odor wafted off him that said that wasn't all of it. Kei didn't say anything, however. If he screwed up their getting on the team, Yamaguchi would never forgive him.

"Anyway," Daichi began again, "um...so we are having a small practice match Saturday. There are, uh, two other first years besides you two. It's a game we hold every year to assess your skills, though, I suppose this year it's a little different." He shook his head, "Doesn't matter. So, come around two, okay?"

"Okay," Yamaguchi replied for both of them, his nervousness disappearing under excitement. Kei just nodded.

"Uh, alright then. See you two Saturday." With that, Daichi nodded at them and turned around clapping his hands. "Receive drills," he yelled at his teammates as he jogged back to them and they scrambled to comply.

Kei and Yamaguchi left the building, Yamaguchi excitedly chirping about how Kei was going to blow them away.

"Shut up, Yamaguchi," Kei mumbled.

"Sorry, Tsukki!"

The sky was already darkening by the time Kei and Yamaguchi started heading for home. The odor that had been plaguing Kei had begun to clear in the fresh air but as they turned a corner the stench washed over his senses once again, making him scrunch his nose in disgust.

"You alright, Tsukki?" Yamaguchi asked, his face twisted up with worry.

Kei was getting irritated at being asked that stupid question every time he showed the slightest discomfort. He knew his friend was only concerned for his sake but how many times did Kei have to let him know he was fine? Kei did not reply but he did tilt his head at the sound of voices in the distance. Without warning he turned toward the noise and walked off. Yamaguchi shouted at him to wait up but Kei kept walking until he found the source of the voices...and apparently the odor. He knew from the moment he saw the two teens tossing a volleyball back and forth that the odor was coming from the raven haired one. Since the tournament when he'd first got a whiff he'd felt the need to stomp it out. Now he had his chance.
Tobio had dragged Hinata to an empty field to practice his crappy receives. The little shit had gotten him in so much trouble and now he had to rely on his skills to win a match in order to play on the team as a setter. Tobio was irritated.

However, he couldn’t say it was completely the dumbass’s fault. He hadn't known that the moment he stepped onto campus he’d be assaulted by that same acidic stench that had nearly smothered him at his last middle school tournament.

The very moment the smell had touched his nose it had put his proverbial hackles up and he'd been unable to let his guard down the entire day. By the end of his first day he was ready to choke someone and had only been able to calm himself after he'd reached the gym and practice serves as he waited for the team captain.

That's when he'd met Hinata, or more correctly, met him again. He'd been preoccupied with his workout but had recognized him immediately. How could he not, his orange hair and declaration of rivalry still floated to the surface of his consciousness on occasion.

However, he had been so uptight over that stench that Hinata's surprise arrival and subsequent freak-out had done little to curb his need for blood and he’d taken his irritation out on him. Tobio had been so caught up in their arguing that he'd not paid attention to the damage he was causing the new team he'd hoped to join and had been, literally, tossed out of the gym on his ass.

He could admit to being partially to blame for the cluster fuck that had been his introduction to Karasuno's volleyball team. If middle school had taught him anything, it was that his competitive drive bordered on psychotic when he lost control. But, there was something about that short, bumbling red-head who called himself an ace- snort - that riled him up and caused him to lose all sense of self-control.

Now he was hanging out in a field by the school, practicing receives with the dumbass (or at least he was practicing, Hinata was more or less playing ball boy). If it weren't for the fact that he desperately wanted to win Saturday's match (his position as setter depended on it) he would have gone home a long time ago. However, Hinata's tenacity to win was as obsessive as his own, which was admirable, no matter how much the idiot sucked at playing.

At least the air was cleaner outside. The stench was dispersed by the cool breeze that wafted lightly around them and Tobio was not as intensely angry because of it and their practice exercises. That was, until it rolled over him when a tall blond appeared like a fucking ninja out of the shadows and plucked their volleyball out of the air. Tobio knew, in that moment the cause of his misery and a low growl started in his chest.

"A little late for practicing,” The blonde condescended. He was looking directly at Tobio, his gold eyes intense and a small, devilish smirk played at the corners of his mouth. Behind him was another kid (not quite as tall), his face covered in freckles. He was snickering, commenting on the chilly air and their lack of outerwear. The blonde looked down on Hinata and tilted his head, "Shouldn't elementary school children be at home already?"

"Who the hell are you!?" Hinata barked at the blonde and his companion, his expression murderous while making grabby hands for the ball and hopping around, trying to snag it back.
"You're the two who caused all the ruckus with the Vice Principal," the blonde ignored Hinata's indignant squawking and returned his gaze to Tobio, amusement in his voice.

Tobio stood his full height and gazed back at the blonde with a haughty expression, refusing to bow to anyone who smelled as rank as that guy.

"You're the two other first years joining the club. How tall are you?" He asked.

"Hey! Don't ignore me, asshole!" Hinata hollered in the background and pouted.

"Tsukki's 188cm and still growing!" The freckled kid answered for the blonde, his face pridefully smug as if he was the giant. Hinata looked at the blonde with awe and envy and still entirely ignored.

"Why are you bragging, Yamaguchi?" The blonde chided, still staring down Tobio and his friend mumbled an automatic apology.

Tobio had not entirely cared about the blonde's height but it had seemed as good as any other question to ask so he could size him up. He was taller than Tobio but not as broad and though his height did give him an advantage, it was his eyes that made him intimidating. They burned like liquid gold.

Thankfully, Tobio had a stronger constitution than to be cowed by sanctimonious bastards.

The blonde narrowed his eyes at Tobio, "You're Kageyama Tobio from Kitagawa Daichii. What's his Highness doing in a common school for common people?" His smirk only grew bigger knowing his insult would not go unnoticed.

Tobio flinched, hating himself for allowing the asshole's words to get to him, but Hinata yelled loudly enough to grab the attention of Tobio and the blonde.

"Oi! We won't lose to you on Saturday!"

The blonde blinked at him for a moment before pressing the ball to his head in exasperation. Then his face eased into a cocky smirk, his gold eyes malicious as he bounced the ball up and down in one of his large hands.

"If you're so worried about winning we can throw the game, if you like?"

Hinata blinked back in confusion, "Throw the…?" It didn't take long before an offended expression rolled over his face, turning it as red as his hair in anger. "What...!?"

"It doesn't matter what you do, I'll still win," Tobio snapped, his face contorted in fury.

Hinata's head snapped around to look at his partner who was watching the blonde through narrowed eyes, a malevolent aura surrounding him.

"Don't you mean we!?" Hinata yelled back at Tobio, his eyes wide in disbelief and his mouth turned down into snarl.

The blonde snickered, "You're a cocky fucker, aren't you King?" His eyes flashed darkly at Tobio.
Tobio clenched his fist at his sides, his body trembling with barely contained rage, "Don't call me that."

At one time in his life he would never have cared what people thought of him. Then he was kicked off his middle school team, his teammates refusing to play with him anymore after his tantrum at their tournament. Since then, while he may still struggle to reign in his personality, he's made a conscious effort to be more mindful. So when people used his old nickname, it was no wonder he got angry. However, add to it the rancid smell rolling off the blonde and they were all lucky he hadn't tried to bite his asshole throat out.

"Ahh...that's right..." the blonde mocked, his smirk growing as his words struck a nerve, "I'd heard the King gets pissed when you use his nickname. I don't know why, though, it's kinda cool. It fits you, you know? The King of the Court."

Hinata stood near the two, looking back and forth, trying to understand the exchange that was happening as Tobio and the blonde jerk glared at each other as if they wanted to kill the other.

"Dude, what the fuck is your problem?" Tobio growled through clenched teeth. "What the fuck do you want?"

Tobio was desperately trying to contain his anger, not wanting to get into another fight that could possibly result in being expelled, or worse, cause him to permanently lose his chance to play volleyball. He wanted nothing more than to knock the tall bastard to the ground and kick him until he felt bone crunch beneath his feet, but some small portion of his brain that still had control screamed at him to stay calm.

The blonde casually walked up to Tobio. He leaned into his space, close enough that Tobio could feel the breath from his lips, and in a low voice filled with mocking, said, "I saw your tournament. That was some crazy tossing. I don't know how your teammates tolerated it because I sure as fuck couldn't." His smile grew wicked and eyes flashed maliciously, "Oh, that's right, they couldn't."

The last of Tobio’s restraint snapped like a coil wound too tight. Before anyone could stop him he'd grabbed the blonde by front of his shirt, his dark blue eyes turned nearly black and a low growl rumbled in his throat. He glared at the blonde as both of their scents poured into the field, battling for prominence.

The asshole continued to leer, gold eyes gleaming in the sickly yellow light of the lamppost, his expression daring Tobio to draw first blood. The blonde’s chest vibrates with a low growl and his lips twitched, flashing sharp white teeth.

"Tsukki!" The freckled teenager, who'd been forgotten in the exchange, yelled, though no one paid him any mind.

Hinata bounced nervously from the sidelines, unconsciously making a high pitched whining sounds that brought the two aggressive teens out of their posturing. They looked at him for a moment. Then Tobio suddenly let go of the blonde and walked off, grabbing his things.

"Oi, Kageyama..." Hinata yelped but was interrupted.

"Running away, are we? That's not very Kingly..." the blonde further instigated as he picked up the stray ball and tossed it again, but he was obstructed by a flash of ginger hair. Surprised, his wide eyes landed on the small redhead.
"Hey, asshole! Stop all the 'King' stuff! We will kick your ass on Saturday, you got that!?” Hinata held the ball and stared the taller male down.

"Huh,” the blonde deadpanned and Hinata scurried back a few feet, his courage obviously spent.

"The hell are you looking at!? Wanna go!?” Hinata's words held little threat despite his challenge as he appeared to hide behind the ball in his hands.

Tobio stopped and turned to watch, his own anger exhausted. Two things had happened that had kept him from reacting violently; the first was he’d snagged his lip on teeth that were much sharper (and longer) than he remembered. It was a brief distraction from the fury that ran beneath his skin like liquid fire and the dangerous atmosphere that permeated the empty field. The second was that Hinata kept making these weird noises and Tobio suddenly picked up on a new scent, something subtle that floated beneath the layers of the overwhelming scents pouring off him and the blonde. It smelled like wilted flowers and dry grass and whatever it was sparked something in him, a desire to calm down, and oddly enough, comfort.

Comfort what, he wasn't sure, but regardless he'd eased back and let go of the blonde intending to leave. Then Hinata called to him and he'd stopped, not really meaning to, and turned to see him standing up to the asshole.

The blonde sighed as he gazed at Hinata, "Hey, let's not get overexcited, right? Besides, it's just a club. No need to overreact.” He said this as he turned to his friend, motioning for them to take their leave.

"What do you mean, 'Just a club'!?" Hinata squealed, angry and offended, yet again.

"Who are you guys?" Tobio called back, ignoring Hinata.

The blonde looked back over his shoulder, "Tsukishima Kei."

His friend turned to reply, too, "Yamaguchi Tadashi."

"We're your teammates...or at least we will be. Right now we're your enemies. See you Saturday," Tsukishima added his tone now bored, and with that, the two walked off, leaving Tobio and Hinata to stew over the last few minutes.

Hinata turned to Tobio, his brown eyes dark and intense, "Again."

Tobio stared after the two for a second then dragged his attention to Hinata. He was glaring at him, his presence much bigger than his small stature.

"Again,” Tobio agreed, his face set in determination. He would not lose to that piece of shit.

The other scent still wafted in the air around them, the soured tint now fresh like flowers or springtime grass. It rippled off of Hinata but Tobio spared it little thought as he served the ball to the ginger.

~O~
When Kei abruptly turned to follow that awful smell earlier, he'd never have guess he'd run into the mighty Kageyama Tobio, the fucking *King of the Court*. He'd been delighted, eagerly engaging in tormenting him. He'd known right off the bat that scent was coming from the arrogant asshole making him giddy with malicious intent, maybe even a desire to physically injure him. At that moment he didn't care, the smell was so overwhelming Kei couldn't even be bothered to keep from wolfing out.

However, he'd not counted on there being the little red headed brat practicing with him. Kei would have happily ignored him, except he'd refused to blend in with the background and forced them all to acknowledge him.

It wasn't until the King grabbed Kei that he'd truly become aware of the short, ginger teen. The perilous atmosphere in that small field had been palpable and both he and the King had been on the verge of exchanging physical blows when the Shrimp had literally whimpered, high-pitched and nasally. The sound had been pathetic and had pulled him back from the brink of bloodshed, causing him to turn his head to look at the smaller teen.

Then he noticed the smell. Beneath the outpouring of odor wafting off him and the King, Kei had noticed another, third scent. It was subtle enough to nearly miss it but Kei's nose was almost better than a bloodhound’s and he'd picked it up- barely.

It was light, floating on the breeze and nearly overcome by the his and the King’s scents but it reminded Kei of old, dead flowers and grass dried out from lack of water. It was sickly sweet and acrid all at once, fearful and worried. Kei couldn't be sure, it wasn't strong enough, but he thought it might be coming from the red-head and, for a brief moment, Kei wanted to reach out and console him, to ease his nerves and calm his scent. His body responded by involuntarily releasing more pheromones and flooding the field.

Kei was shocked by this revelation but managed to reign in his surprise before anyone saw. He noticed the King’s scent had reacted the same as his, pouring into the field, both of them mingling, trying to counteract the other and provide comfort at the same time. That had pissed Kei off nearly as much as the King’s presence which Kei found very confusing.

Once the King had released him, Kei ambled to where the ball had fallen, attempting to give himself a reprieve from the strange occurrence. He'd be pondering these events at a later time, but for now he needed to establish dominance over the King, this was his territory after all. He planned to mark it at a later time, privately.

The redhead had hollered after the King as he attempted to leave the situation. Kei seized the chance to gloat since the King was abandoning and yielding the situation to Kei, (as far as he was concerned). He couldn't help but rib him one last time.

"Running away, are we? That's not very kingly…,” he ridiculed as he tossed the ball in one hand again, a self-satisfied smirk returning to his face, but he was interrupted when the Shrimp jumped too high to be normal and snatched the ball from the air. Kei’s usually controlled expression slipped and his eyes grew wide, his mouth hanging open in surprise. He stared in disbelief at the Shrimp who'd landed just before him, honey-brown eyes narrowed and flashing like fire, locking onto the tall blonde with unwavering intensity.

"Hey, asshole! Stop all the 'King' stuff! We'll kick your ass on Saturday, you got that!?"

Kei was appalled that someone so small could carry such a big presence. It filled the field they stood
on and the odor he'd caught earlier - it was definitely coming from the redhead - came on a little stronger. However, instead of sweet and sickly, it was now in full bloom like gardenias and freshly mowed sweet grass. It was warm and smelled like spring and Kei struggled not to breathe deeply of the scent.

Mortified by his response and refusing to succumb to something so perverse, he made his expression flat and emotionless. "Huh," was all he replied and the ginger shrimp scurried back a few feet before threatening to fight him. Kei nearly laughed at his sudden and ridiculous change of attitude.

"Hey, lets not get overexcited, right? Besides, it's just a club. No need to overreact," Kei relaxed into a neutral stance and affected his fakest smile. He turned to leave, finally remembering his friend who'd been quiet and anxious, by the look on his face. Kei jerked his head, indicating he was ready to vacate the area and Yamaguchi followed Kei's lead.

This response seemed to piss off the Shrimp even more as he began yelling back at Kei. Then the King yelled at them.

"Who are you guys?"

Kei half turned toward them, "Tsukishima Kei."

"Yamaguchi Tadashi," Yamaguchi spoke, his voice more quiet and less confident.

"We're your teammates...or at least we will be. Right now we're your enemies. See you Saturday," Kei added with a small grin. He wasn't suggesting that they be anything less in the near future. He and Yamaguchi finally walked off, leaving the other two behind.

Yamaguchi was silent. Kei could feel the fear and worry seeping out of him, he could smell it in the air, a subtle edge to Yamaguchi's usually mild scent. He was completely and utterly astounded by the confrontation that had happened back in that field but didn't know how to address it and Kei didn't know how to comfort Yamaguchi. He was just as bewildered by his own loss of control.

As Kei and Yamaguchi left the King and the Shrimp behind, he could feel Yamaguchi side eyeing him though he chose to ignore it.

"What was that back there?" Yamaguchi's tentative voice broke into the cool night, unable to keep his questions to himself any longer. Kei knew his best friend was usually used to his surly behavior and hostile words. But even Kei had to admit this had been different, the deadly aura that rolled off him and his antagonistic behavior that had been borderline psychotic. Not too mention the growling or the sudden change in appearance that he was sure had made him look almost animalistic.

Yamaguchi had never been afraid of Kei before but he never seen Kei nearly unhinged, either.

Kei glanced at him before letting his eyes fall forward again. He shrugged his shoulders, "I can't stand hot blooded people."

It wasn't a lie, exactly. Kei honestly didn't like people who excited easily. However, it was more than that. It was the King, specifically his scent, and it was a challenge to his superiority. While he would normally never confront a challenger, never really having to before, he felt a primal urge with the King. A need to dominate him and he couldn't let it slide. But he didn't say any of that to Yamaguchi, he wouldn't understand and would just look at Kei like he was a freak. Kei already conceded that he was, in fact, a freak but didn't feel the need to have it confirmed by his only friend.

Yamaguchi watched him for a minute in silence. When they came to the corner where their paths
split, Yamaguchi stopped, turning to face his best friend.

"You nearly got in a fight. You never fight. At least not with your fists."

Kei glanced at him and looked away. He shrugged again. It was true, what could he say? Away from the school and away from the odor of the King, his rage had completely dissipated, leaving him slightly embarrassed by his actions and tired from the emotional tension.

"You know that we are gonna have to deal with him on a daily basis if we continue to want to play?"

Kei stared at Yamaguchi. His smaller, mousey haired friend wasn't normally so assertive. Kei stood there under the scrutinizing gaze of his friend and felt a little more embarrassed.

~O~

Yamaguchi gazed back at Tsukki, his grey-brown eyes narrowed and searching, trying to figure out what his best friend was feeling.

Yamaguchi and Tsukishima had been friends for a long time. Yamaguchi had known Tsukki before the falling out with his brother, when the blonde had been...happier and more emotive. He'd watched as Tsukki grew more angry and isolating after the confrontation and he'd learned how to read him the best. So when Yamaguchi observed repentance roll over Tsukki’s golden eyes and his face flush, he nodded, satisfied that his friend had gotten the point.

Yamaguchi was the only one who saw his emotionally guarded friend in that way- vulnerable and sorry. That was how close they were and Yamaguchi was proud of it. He wore it like a badge of honor and it made him braver. Tsukki was his friend, his companion. Tsukki was his.

Yamaguchi smiled at him, he didn't want Tsukki to think he was angry, only concerned for his well-being. His best friend rolled his eyes with mock exasperation and shoved Yamaguchi’s face.

"Don't get cocky, dumbass."

"Sorry, Tsukki."

~O~

Kei turned down the corner, heading toward his home, stopping when Yamaguchi called after him.

"Tsukki!"

He turned around to see Yamaguchi’s goofy grin.

"See you tomorrow!" Yamaguchi hollered, then he skip off, not waiting for a reply and knowing one wouldn't have been forthcoming.
Kei snorted and walked away. He was glad he had a friend like Yamaguchi. He made Kei feel almost normal, never delving too far into the secrets Kei kept, respecting his need for privacy. Sometimes Kei wished he could share all the weirdness with his friend but didn't want to burden him unnecessarily since Kei had no real answers.

However, he did have a lot more questions now since meeting the King and the Shrimp. He thought back on the evening as he walked through the dark toward his house. He thought about the King’s own physical change and how it mirrored Kei’s, his teeth fang-like. He thought about the Shrimp and his fiery eyes and Kei’s stomach fluttered but he couldn’t decipher the feeling behind it. There was something about him that Kei couldn't put his finger on. Something about that scent.

Things were getting stranger. Growing up, Kei had thought he was the only one who carried a scent the way he did. His physician told him it was a normal side effect of the genetic disorder he had so he never thought much of it until the tournament. Then he was confronted by a second carrier. He hadn't known that's what it was right away because he'd been so emotionally charged, but later, when he sat at home, thinking about that day, he'd come to the conclusion that someone else had the same condition he did, regardless of how rare the doctors told him it was.

The probability of him running into another was infinitesimal so he had been shocked but not in any hurry to meet the person. Not since it had made him violently angry. But he had met him, the King, surprisingly. Yet, that had not been the end of it. There had been- impossibly- a third. One whose scent had not showed up until Kei and the King had nearly come to blows.

Kei had so many questions and no answers and his doctors were no help. He needed to find out what was going on. He had a sneaking suspicion there was more to this than what he'd been told.

Chapter End Notes

Next:

Chapter 5: Hinata Shōyō
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First Year, High School, Spring

The heat hit him like a tidal wave. Literally. Later on he had a memory of his grandma once describing hot flashes. She said that they came suddenly and without warning, rolling over her body as if she'd been supplanted onto the face of the sun, her whole person soaked in sweat within seconds. She had told him that it was hard to breath and every movement was as if her muscles were being pulled through hot sand.

Shōyō can sympathize now, but then, then it had been a shock to his system, an impact of astronomical proportions that left him feeling like a spirit trapped in an alien body.

Shōyō had been down stairs having breakfast with his mother and sister. It was Sunday, the day following the practice match with his new teammates. They had practice that afternoon and Daichi was going to announce their positions. Shōyō was a mixed bag of nerves and excitement hoping he would be a wing spiker. That morning he was enjoying a rare opportunity to relax with his family before his schedule got too hectic.

Shōyō and his sister had been singing silly songs over pancakes while their mother drank coffee and giggled at their antics. It was fun and normal in the Hinata household, but it wasn't to last. One minute Shōyō was laughing and singing in ridiculous voices and the next he was on the floor whimpering in distress. There was no build up, no burgeoning symptoms, just sudden, white, hot, inexplicable heat burning beneath his skin, overwhelming all his other senses and shutting down his ability to process thought.

Then it stopped. Just as quick as it came over him it left and he came to his senses, albeit slowly, and he was left panting in a pool of sweat, his muscles feeling like they'd been stretched to the point of tearing and his bones as brittle as glass.

His mother hovered over him, her hands flitting to various parts of his body as she desperately tried to find the source of her son's malady. His sister, Natsu, only six years old and confused about what happened sat at the table crying, "Onii-chan! Is Onii-chan okay!?” Shōyō could tell she was terribly upset by the way she choked on the words and hiccuped.

Satisfied that there were no obvious signs of trauma, his mother stood up and quickly moved to the phone. "Shōyō," she fretted, one hand making a stay-where-you're-at-gesture, the other grabbing for the landline, "don't move, baby. Stay there, I'm calling an ambulance.”
Natsu was still crying and Shōyō couldn't bear the sound of her worrying over him, so he gently lifted himself onto an elbow and shook his head to clear the remaining fuzziness.

"Nachan, it's okay. Don't cry, I'm-" and that was as far as he got before a warmth spread through his body in a lazy rolling wave. It wasn't as searing as the heat that had come on him previously; instead it was more like laying too close to a fireplace and being wrapped in too warm blankets. He groaned, his eyes going straight to his mother.

She was on the phone with emergency services, trying to explain what had happened to Shōyō. Her eyes had never left him and now they grew wide, her voice faltering as she watched Shōyō fall back to the floor, his back arching and fingers scrambling for something to hold, fingernails digging into the linoleum.

"Mom..." Shōyō croaked, his big honey-brown eyes wide with fear and uncertainty.

"S-something is happening!" She told the voice on the other end of the line. Her own voice was beginning to tremble as she had no idea what was going on with Shōyō or how to help him. "I th-think he's having a seizure!"

Shōyō could hear the faint, patient and comforting voice of the emergency services person, "Ma'am, ma'am, please, can you describe your son's condition?"

Shōyō's mother could barely respond as she watched him struggle.

Shōyō, on the other hand felt weird. There was no word that existed in the Japanese language that could have satisfactorily described the sensation that washed over him. After the heat had come a new feeling, something familiar but exponentially more intense.

Shōyō began to pant, his breathing coming in short heavy puffs. His skin exploded in beads of sweat that made him feel as if he'd just been dumped in a pool, his hair was soaked and he could feel it dripping to the floor beneath him. Something wet and sticky began to seep from between his butt cheeks, slow at first, then heavier, like he'd peed himself. However, it was confusing because the feeling came from the wrong area.

The warmth rolled over him again and Shōyō arched again, this time planting his feet, his butt coming off the ground, the wetness dripping down his backside before sliding down his back. Shōyō groaned but it wasn't in pain. The feeling he had was utter frustration. His body was crying out for something, it wanted something.

"F-fuuck!" He moaned, his eyes rolling to the back of his head and mouth dropping open. On any other day, Shōyō would have been mortified to use language like that in front of his mother and especially his little sister, however, in his addled state, Shōyō could think of little else to utter that adequately conveyed his feelings. He was so confused. He could not understand what this sensation was. When the heat came over him again, images, unbidden, flashed before his eyes; images of naked flesh, and hands, and lips, and the unfamiliar feeling of fullness.

Yes, he understood then...

Wanting. That was it, his brain supplied it for him somewhere out of his subconscious. Shōyō wanted. He was hot and needing and he wanted...something. His eyes rolled again and he groaned. Shōyō's head lolled back and forth, whimpers escaping his lips that he desperately bit back, ashamed
at the keening sounds he was making as he writhed on the floor feeling empty and...

So. Painfully. *Hard*.

Shōyō whined long and low, more of the wetness poured out from his ass, his dick throbbing between his legs.

"F-fucking sh-it!" He moaned loudly.

"Shō...yō..." he heard his mother whisper, it sounded mortified and if Shōyō had been in any condition to do so, he would have prostrated himself on the floor and begged forgiveness for his lewd behavior. But he couldn't, he was too busy grinding his thighs together, dying for some release, any type of friction on his painful erection.

"Mommy, what is Onii-chan doing?"

Shōyō groaned, both from humiliation and desire. The heat continued to pour over him like warm honey and his nose vaguely picked up a sharp scent that flooded the entire room, his ass still leaking rivulets.

"Eww, mommy, what's that smell!?" Natsu wailed, looking from her mother to her brother. Shōyō's mother looked at him, completely speechless and frozen.

He couldn't take it anymore, Shōyō had to find relief. Barely conscious of his own movements, one hand lifted from the floor, the slightest hesitation staying it before he desperately palmed himself over his gym shorts, grinding his hips into his own hand.

"SHŌYŌ!" He heard his mother cry out in outrage and shame. "Shōyō SHŌYŌ! STOP THAT RIGHT NOW!" She slapped her leg insistently but stopped when it had no effect.

From the landline the operator could be heard frantically trying to gain his mother's attention to no avail, she was too concerned with her son pleasing himself in the middle their kitchen while his younger sister watched in horror and confusion.

"Mo-om," Shōyō pleaded, "I c-can't! I n-need, ngh, need to cu-ngh!" He couldn't finish his sentence, losing himself to the semi-pleasurable feeling of his own hand on his dick.

His mother made some sort of strange noise, something between a sob and a gasp. Shōyō continued, even as humiliation broke through the daze of desire. It felt good, too good actually, he was *sooo* sensitive. However, it wasn't enough, not in the long run. He needed more, he needed to be...filled, but he did not know what to do?That simple thought brought on a fresh wave and he could feel the slickness double between his ass cheeks. He moaned, long and loud, bucking into his hand.

"SHŌ-" his mother was screaming, "Natsu, honey, get out! Go to your room!"

Natsu tore her eyes away from her brother half-masturbating on the floor of the kitchen, her eyes wide and scared, the evidence of trauma frozen on her small, chubby face.

"Natsu! NOW!"

His little sister jumped from her chair, racing past her mother and glancing at her brother before disappearing up the stairs. Her sobbing echoed soft through the house.
Shōyō barely registered Natsu's escape from the kitchen, only catching his same honey-brown eyes looking at him as she departed. Deep within him, where the old Shōyō still lived and dwelled, he raged at this curse that had somehow found its way to him. He raged, even as he continued to stroke himself on the floor before his mother, panting and moaning and mumbling curses.

His mother appeared at his side, kneeling down to meet him on the floor and Shōyō felt her warm hand brushing his. He briefly stilled, watching her with wide, terrified eyes.

"Shō, baby, stop, okay? Just calm down and stop."

Another wave of heat and desire swept over him and Shōyō could do nothing as a low, animalistic growl rumbled deep in his small chest. "Get the fuck away!" He snapped, baring his teeth. He wanted to drag himself to the safety of his room and cocoon himself in familiar scents but he couldn’t gather up the strength of mind to make his body respond the way he wanted it too. Normally his mother would be his comfort, the way she smelled carrying a sense of calm he’d known all his life. Now her scent only made him feel intruded upon. It made him feel competitive.

Shōyō’s mother yanked her hand away in shock and fear. Then she stood and hurried out of the kitchen. Shōyō could hear her, still on the phone with emergency services.

"Please hurry,” she whispered.

Shōyō sobbed and moaned again, finally giving into his urges. His sister's wide, scared eyes and his shame were the last thing he remembered before he blacked out.

~O~

When Shōyō finally came to, he was surrounded by bright white walls and the sharp antiseptic smell that permeated all hospitals. He was lying on his side, wrapped tightly in a thin hospital blanket and his head rested on a thin hospital pillow.

He sat up slowly, rubbing the sleep from his eyes while trying to process his environment with a sleep fuzzy brain. The room was small but private. It had one long mirror on the left wall, and other than the bed, contained a bathroom, small table, and one uncomfortable looking chair, and no windows. He turned his head and found the solid white door closed. Beside it, on the wall, was what looked to be an intercom consisting of a speaker and a few buttons.

Shōyō was confused. He couldn't recall why he was in a hospital bed. He looked down at his body, his brows furrowed in concentration, and gingerly searched his form for wounds and such. When he found no obvious signs of hurt he started moving his muscles to see if the problem was internal. Nope.

Shōyō sighed, a little concerned at his situation. What was he doing here? What had happened?

He thought of his family, then. If he was here, what about them? Where they okay? Shōyō thought of his little sister. Was Natsu okay? It was his job to look out for her since his father passed away.

Natsu’s golden-brown eyes, so very similar to his own, appeared in his memory...they were....scared....
Shōyō gasped, loudly. Then he screamed.

Less than thirty seconds passed before hospital staff were invading his room to find him buried face down in his bed, screaming into his pillow.

"Hinata-kun, are you okay? Are you hurt?"

Shōyō's head snapped up, tears streaking his pink cheeks and humiliation coloring his face.

"GET OUT!" He screamed.

"Hinata-" a doctor tried placating, stepping forward with hands up and face carefully neutral.

"GET OUT!" Shōyō screamed again, too lost in his humiliation to register that they had come to help.

The doctor looked at him for a moment before ushering the staff out, glancing back once, his bland face a mixture of curiosity and compassion.

When the door closed, Shōyō flopped face first onto the bed again, attempting to smother himself. Well, not really, but he contemplated the action as he remembered the events of that day and how'd he'd literally jacked off in the kitchen while his mother and sister- while NATSU- stood by. Shōyō was so mortified he could barely think, even while on some level he knew he'd had little control of himself.

He couldn't breathe. Shōyō sat up swiftly, grabbing his chest as he panted, his mind swirling with memories. His vision was starting to swim as those memories kept accosting his mind without ceasing. He remembered the kitchen but had blacked out after that so his memories were spotty but returning in full as he lay down in the fetal position, stomach heaving with disgust and self-loathing.

He had flashes of visions of being in an ambulance, of people he didn't know. He remembered growling and snapping teeth and being unable to ease the growing heat in his body, his hands and arms unable to move. He could see the hospital, hear the frantic voices, his worried mother, concerned whispers. He remembered a sharp pain and a drowsiness that consumed him and snuffed out the fire building beneath his skin.

He remembered waking up in the same room he was in currently, and the same crawling warmth returning with a vengeance. He remembered touching himself in places that made him blush to think about but it had felt amazing and he'd been so sensitive.

He had been so hard and wanting and...empty... and he'd stroked himself to orgasm in moments. But it didn't stop after that. The insane need for pleasure had not subsided because it had not been enough.

And that's how it had gone, repeating over and over like the lust would continue on for the rest of time, never ceasing and never allowing him satisfaction. He was insane with desire and need and possessiveness. He had been angry on top of horny and anytime someone entered the room, during the short intervals between the waves of heat, he was shouting and threatening.

The anger had, in part, been due to his humiliation and dissatisfaction, but it had also been a result of some primal feeling of invasion. The room he'd been holed up in, though not his own, had become
his domain. The fact that people came and went seeming of their own accord and without his permission would throw him into a violent rage. They'd overstepped their boundaries and come into his...his...his space.

But then the weirdness faded, the heats and urges and possessiveness petered out, slowly, and Shōyō had collapsed, blessedly into oblivion, sleeping in order to recover from the long ordeal.

That's how he remembered it upon waking in the very sparse room, alone with his memories and humiliation.

So why had this happened to him?

~O~

"HInata-kun, how are you feeling?"

Shōyō refused to look directly at the smartly dressed woman who'd entered his room a few minutes ago. She'd entered after one knock, pulling the single chair to his bedside and taking a seat, before introducing herself as Junko Shizue, doctor of psychology, “You can call me Dr. Junko.”

She wore a classic black pencil skirt and white blouse under a fitted black blazer. She crossed her legs that ended in a pair of simple pumps and folded her hands atop the legal pad of paper sitting on her lap. Her head, framed by cropped and graying hair, tilted to one side and as Shōyō side-eyed her suspiciously, he could tell her sharp features were carefully blank but genuinely interested. Shōyō shrugged, fidgeting with the blanket that covered his legs.

"HInata-kun, you can talk to me, it's why I'm here. I came to listen and make sure you're okay. There's no judgement and our conversations are mostly confidential."

Shōyō turned to look at her, his eyes narrowing. Dr. Junko tilted her head in the direction of the wall-length mirror behind her, “It's for observation so someone can record our conversation and monitor your responses.”

Shōyō's eyes widened and he shrunk a little in on himself as he understood the implications of her explanation. People had been "observing him" for far longer than that moment. Dr. Junko leaned toward him, affecting a concerned and compassionate expression.

"It's okay. No one has dealt with a situation as...unique...as yours. The observation was intended to keep you safe."

Shōyō looked away from her. He didn't really believe his safety was their top concern. He could...sense...something off about her words. It was in the way she tried too hard to keep her expression neutral and in the way she smelled, making the air in the room just slightly more acidic. Shōyō couldn't say how he could tell this, he just could. He could be perceptive, he knew, under the right conditions, but this was a whole new level of weird, even for him. It scared him.

The psychologist sat back and sighed, glancing at the mirror briefly before turning back to observe him, chewing the inside of her cheek as she thought about how to continue.
Shōyō wasn't normally rude, or quiet. In fact, Shōyō was the exact opposite of those two descriptions being extroverted and kindhearted to a fault. But his current situation was an exception, he was still humiliated and he didn't quite trust these people.

For one thing, he still hadn't been told about his whereabouts or his family. He hadn't really asked but he didn't think the situation warranted his inquiries. You'd think it would be obvious the fifteen year-old would be confused and worried for his loved ones. Hell, maybe he was here because his mother didn't want him anymore. He wouldn't, not after the way he behaved, especially in front of his six year-old sister. Shōyō hung his head, his whole body trembling, overcome with shame once again and fighting back the tears that threatened to break free.

"You're feeling guilty, aren't you?" The woman asked quietly.

Shōyō hesitated, then nodded and sniffed, a few teardrops escaping, regardless of his effort, to fall on his hands that were clasped in his lap. He returned to fidgeting nervously.

"I won't say there's no need because I'm sure I would feel the same if I were in your shoes. But let me assure you, nobody, including your mother," Shōyō's head snapped up to look at her wide-eyed and fearful, "thinks any less of you. We all understand that you were unable to control your...impulses. Your mother has been briefed on your situation since she brought you in. She's more worried about you then what happened."

Shōyō couldn't help it when the tears officially fell. He covered his face with one arm and sobbed into it, feeling like the lowest life form on the planet and loving his mom even more because she still loved him.

Dr. Junko sat quietly, allowing Shōyō to cry as long as needed. When he'd finally calmed enough to lower his arm, she was there with tissue, which she handed to him. Shōyō looked at her and smiled, small and shy.

She smiled back.

"W-what happened to me?" Shōyō finally broke his silence, asking the one thing that had been plaguing him since he woke.

The psychologist sat back in her chair once again and sighed, her lips pursed in a grimace.

"We are not sure. All we know is that it's a symptom of the genetic disorder you carry...and that it will happen again."

Shōyō's eyes bugged out of his head, desperation and terror crawling over his face. "I-I can't go through that again!" He panicked, his voice high and thin.

Dr. Junko raised her hand in a calming gesture, "I know it's hard to process but it is not something that can be helped. As far as we know it will be a monthly occurrence."

Shōyō choked, burying his hands in his hair and his face in his knees. He couldn't cope with that information, it was too much. Every month!? How could he be expected to suffer like that on a monthly basis!? He would die before he went through that experience again.

"There is a possible upside, however."
Shōyō’s head snapped up and he wiped his nose on his arm, staring at the woman as if she held the answers to the universe.

"You've been coming to the hospital to see your physician regularly since you were born. Because of that, and the blood samples we've obtained in the last few days, we are pretty sure we can produce a suppressant based off your hormones."

Shōyō looked at her confuse, tilting his head and his big eyes growing wider, "Suppressant?"

She nodded, slowly, "A medication you could take to block most of the symptoms of your...disorder."

Shōyō, filled with hope and excitement, scrambled off the bed, his hesitance toward the woman forgotten as his only hope dangled like a carrot before him. Dr. Junko leaned back in her chair as Hinata lunged at her, his small hands clasped hers firmly, his eyes sparkling. Behind him, the door opened and a couple of large men eased into the room, quiet, and holding a sedative.

"You mean I won't have to suffer again? Like, I can take this medicine and I won't have to...you know?"

The woman relaxed and glanced at the men at the door, barely nodding her head. They retreated, the door closing with a soft click.

"Yes, Shōyō, but it's still experimental." She pulled her hands from him and gently pushed him until he was back to sitting on the narrow bed. "Because this is a first for us, and you, we are not entirely sure how well it will work. I don't want you to get your hopes up too high only to be disappointed, understand?"

Shōyō nodded enthusiastically, “But it's a possibility?"

Dr. Junko smiled at him, “Yes.”

Shōyō felt relieved almost immediately. He'd do anything- give anything- not to experience anything like that again, not to put his family through it again. He wanted to cry but he managed to choke back happy tears, beaming his megawatt smile at the woman.

Dr. Junko adjusted herself, crossing her legs again and settling her legal pad in her lap. She pulled a pen from the inside of her jacket and clicked the thruster.

"Now, can you tell me how you are feeling?"

Shōyō sat back, leaning against the raised bed and thin pillow. He smiled again, “Better.”

~O~

They kept him there one more night before releasing him saying they needed to do extra tests in order to monitor any changes in his physiology and make sure there would be no complications. They also took more blood for the medication they were trying create. They were hopeful that they would have a decent suppressant before his next occurrence, which they now referred to as his ‘heat
cycle”. Shōyō had wrinkled his nose at that, feeling like it described him as having a monthly period more than anything else.

In that time, Shōyō learned that he'd been brought by the ambulance and his mother had been questioned whether or not her son had overdosed on medication like viagra. It was a ridiculous insinuation because there were no other men in the Shōyō household. However, Shōyō's own physician, Dr. Uemura had been brought in, having been on standby and alerted to impending situations concerning anything to do with his disorder.

Once he'd made an appearance, it was moments before he had Shōyō transferred to a private observation room on a floor of the hospital that Shōyō had known well, having visited on multiple occasions since he could remember. It had given Shōyō comfort to know he was in a familiar place, if not a familiar room. Unfortunately, due to his circumstance, Shōyō's mother had been denied visitor privileges, though, according to the nurses who had dealt with her, she'd put up a good fight trying to see him.

Shōyō was the most upset he'd missed a total of four practices. He'd barely even joined the team before being taken out of it by a debilitating sickness that no one understood. It was made more depressing that his debilitating sickness boiled down to excessive masturbation. The thought was almost as humiliating as knowing he'd done those...things...in front of his mom and Natsu. His only consolation was the hope that the doctors could figure out the suppressant thing. They had asked him all sorts of questions regarding his symptoms, the most significant centering on the days or weeks before the incident; did he notice any changes in mood, any changes in appetite or sleep patterns, weight gain or loss. Shōyō could not answer accurately and it was one of the few times he hated how little he paid attention to his own body except for whether or not he'd grown. Regardless, he was told to keep an eye out, record any changes he might notice around the same time the following month because it was more than likely his symptoms would return then. He was encouraged to contact them for an appointment the moment he suspected his symptoms returning. Shōyō had agreed enthusiastically, he wasn’t lying about doing anything- subjecting himself to anything- to never have to experience that again.

Shōyō met his mother in the hospital lobby Tuesday afternoon. He approached slowly, head down and averting his eyes. How could he ever look at his mother again? On one level he knew he had nothing to fear, no impending rejection. His mother loved him, weirdness and all and Dr. Junko had assured him on multiple occasions that her feelings hadn't changed just because of his circumstances.

Shōyō stopped in front of her and she'd slowly risen as he drew closer. The air was awkward between them for less than a second before she pulled him to her chest and sobbed into his hair, her body shuddering with the force of her cries. Shōyō wrapped his arms around her, sharing her tears and repeatedly apologizing for the pain he'd caused.

"M-m-o-o-om, I'm so sorry. I'm so so-o-rryyyy, mo-omma." Shōyō could feel the warmth of her tears in his hair just as he was sure she could feel his own dampening her shoulder. His body trembled as he squeezed her waist tighter never more grateful to know she was his mother and still loved him.

"Shh, it's okay sunshine. I'm not mad. Don't cry."

Shōyō clung to his mother for another minute, snuffling and hiccuping as he took huge, shuddering breaths in order to quiet his emotions and calm his racing heart. His mother’s gentle hands pushed him back to look him up and down. He still couldn't meet her eyes, humiliated by everything that had happened, including sobbing like a brat. He wiped his nose on the back of his hand and her warm, soft hand grasped his chin as she raised his face to meet her own. It wasn't much of a distance since
she was barely taller than him.

"Look at me Shō."

Hesitant but obedient, Shōyō raised his red, swollen eyes to meet her dark brown ones. Fresh tears rolled down his cheeks to see, not judgement, but unconditional love and concern.

"Are you okay? Did they treat you good in there?"

"Y-yes, ma'am."

She smiled and snorted at him, "Since when do you call me ma'am?"

A small grin tugged at the corner of Shōyō’s mouth. His mother wrapped an arm around his shoulders and directed him toward the entrance.

"Let’s get the hell out of here. Natsu will be glad to see you."

Shōyō stiffened, walking awkwardly as he thought about having to face his sister. He couldn't tell which he dreaded more, facing his team or his sister.

His mom must have felt his change in posture because she squeezed his shoulders for comfort, "I'm pretty sure she's been more worried about you than I have. She hasn't slept a full night since you've been gone. She really misses her big brother."

Shōyō looked at his mom out of the corner of his eye. She was smiling at him reassuringly and he nodded at her in acknowledgement. Except he really wasn’t feeling the reassured.

“Mom, is it okay if you drop me off at school. I’m not quite ready to face her, yet. I know I’m gonna have to eventually but,” Shōyō sighed, staring down at the pavement as he followed his mother to their car, “I just...I just need some time. Besides, I’ve already missed a ton of practice.”

His mother was quiet for a moment, considering his request. They had arrived at their beat up old P.O.S. Toyota and she unlocked the passenger side first, allowing Shōyō to quickly get in. He inhaled deeply and exhaled harshly, feeling a bit more relaxed being in familiar territory. The car smelled of old gym socks and juice, courtesy of Shōyō and his sister, but it was like heaven to him. The confinement of the tiny space and familiar odors made him feel safe. It made him feel normal.

Shōyō’s mother climbed into the driver’s seat moments later, slipping the key into the ignition and turning over the engine. She didn’t make a move to put the car into drive, only sat in the seat with her hands on the wheel and staring out of the windshield. He watched her, apprehension like lead in his gut and wondering if she was going to yell at him. Eventually she turned to Shōyō, her expression troubled, and opened her mouth to say something but paused as her eyes fell over his anxious expression.

Finally her face softened and she smiled softly at him, “That’s fine, Sunshine. We’ll stop by the house and pick up your gear. Just, come home as soon as practice is over, alright?” She hesitated again, biting her lip before adding, “I know this is...difficult for us- for you, but we have to face it Shō. And it’ll be fine, I promise.”

The excitement that had grown in Shōyō had been doused like a flame beneath a torrent of cold water when his mom brought up... that. He knew she was right, he had to go home and deal with it
eventually. He supposed he ought to be grateful she was letting him off the hook so easy. Shōyō looked at his mother, giving her a shy, shame-filled smile, and nodded. It was just practice anyway, he’d be home in time for dinner.

The ride home, when his mother had finally put the car into drive, was both anxiety-inducing and comforting. He was glad to be going home but he was also a little afraid of what awaited him. He was nervous about seeing Natsu. He was also scared about his unknown future. He had a bad feeling that things were going to change from now on and he had no idea what to expect.

~O~

Director Kida stood by the window in his office watching as the small Omega walked with his mother across the parking lot, a cigarette burning between his lips. They had hypothesized the boy would present as the only Omega within the group- the studies showed it was what resulted in a pack that lacked adequate breeding Omegas.

Kida could not help the shiver of anticipation that coursed through his system and cursed when the ash from his cigarette fell into his carpet.

This was the most exciting discovery of his career. Most researchers had deemed the Beta gene theory a myth since none had been documented since the late nineteenth century and information available was so sparse that it's lack had fueled rumors of a hoax. However, Kida had always been a believer. For him, the information that didn't exist was not proof of the theory's fallacy but only a stumbling block to greater understanding. But that was only if one considered the scientific research. In his own research, Kida had stumbled upon many myths and stories about people who carried the traits of wolves.

Take lycanthropy. How much more obvious can anyone get? And underneath myth there is usually a kernel of truth. Either way, the topic had sparked an interest in him back during his med school days and he'd even written his doctorate on the subject. Of course he'd been laughed at, it was a crazy idea- the thought that the human gene could accommodate a lesser organism. At least without the help of science.

Yet, here he was, having the last laugh.

After graduation, Kida had gone on to work for private corporations and special interest groups, unsatisfied by the red tape and morality that plagued research now-a-days. It was during those years that he carried on his own private search for answers and made connections that eventually led him here, a small town that carried not one, but three other active Beta genes.

Kida had been crucial in the development of the program that tagged Betas. With the help of private funding he'd been allowed his research with little regulation and he'd followed the trail. Now he was witnessing the greatest find in known history.

He was going to go down in the history books as the greatest geneticist ever to have been born.

Kida smiled to himself and watched the car carry away his little Omega. He walked back to his desk and sat down, typing in the password for his computer and re-checking formulas. He'd agreed to create the suppressant that would control the heats of the Omega and he was already well on his way
to being finished.

He was thrilled with the way things were going and looking forward to what the future held. But he wanted to control it. He wanted to make sure that the path they all were walking was designed by his hand and none other.

For the time being he'd allow the Omega some peace.

A little peace before the real tests began.

Chapter End Notes

Next:

Chapter 6: Toy Soldier
Chapter 6: Toy Soldier

First Year, High School, Spring

It was Sunday evening and Ukai Keishin sat on his old, threadbare couch in his small, one bedroom apartment wearing nothing but a pair of black boxers and a white t-shirt. The room was dark except for the television that had some documentary running on it, barely loud enough for him to make out the low monotonous rumbling of the narrator, but he wasn't paying much attention anyway.

Ukai was stressed. His grandfather was recently admitted to the hospital for heart problems and while his prognosis was relatively good, that didn't mean he's healthy.

He'd looked up to the old man for years- though he'd never tell him that- and his grandfather was his reason for playing volleyball as a kid. Of all the grandchildren, Ukai had been the only one to show genuine interest growing up and his grandfather had nurtured his enthusiasm. He'd coached him when he wasn't busy coaching at the high school or working his regular job on the farm. And when Ukai had entered high school, he'd had the privilege of playing for his grandfather for three years.

It didn't matter that Ukai was a disappointment as a player. He was never exceptionally talented and he never received a scholarship for university as some did. But that was okay, he had more game sense than he did skill which had fueled the thought of attending a local college to earn a degree in something sports related, mainly to pave the way for future coaching opportunities and follow in the old man’s steps. He had secretly dreamed about coaching for a powerhouse school or University, maybe even hoped to make it onto one of the National teams.

Except his pops had suddenly passed from a fast growing cancer in the middle of his second year, leaving only his mother to take care of the small market her family owned and one less person to help on his grandfather’s farm.

It should have been an easy decision, to stay home and help out after graduation but he had been close with his pops and he had been devastated to lose him, as well as devastated to lose his dream of coaching. That year, Ukai spiraled out of control; getting into fights, missing curfew, or sneaking out to parties. He even got arrested once. He was lucky his grandfather had enough influence over Karasuno’s principal or he would have been expelled for his behavior. As it was, he graduated and even managed to keep his membership in the club though he saw no court time. It was his punishment for putting his grieving mother through hell after losing her beloved husband.

Ukai had hated himself for his selfishness, then, and sometimes still did, when he dwelled on his mistakes. But as soon as he graduated he did what any traumatized and angry teenager would do in his situation, he made an impulsive decision to join the military. He'd only done it to get away, to have a chance to sort himself out. It was cowardly but, at the time, he'd lacked the maturity to work things out with his family as a support.

At first, it wasn't that bad. Of course, the food sucked, as did the lodgings, but he was used to the strict physical regimen- the military had nothing on his grandfather.

Surprisingly, Ukai flourished under the routine and stringent authority. He served well and even travelled abroad a few years, several places throughout Asia and even a short time in the Middle East to name a few. It had been interesting, to say the least, but Ukai was Japanese through and through.
and a country boy at that. He missed his country while away, including old friends and family.

That was what spurred his second most impulsive decision, and his worst. He'd made friends of all ranks in the few years he'd been in service and at one point, after lamenting his woes to a superior officer and close acquaintance on one drunken night, he'd been alerted to an open position with a sector of the JSDF that was dedicated to research.

He'd volunteered and put in his transfer as soon as he was sober enough and said goodbye to traveling abroad. The area was still several hours from home but he'd had the opportunity to see people and family he'd avoided for years and make his apologies. As expected, Ukai had been welcomed back with little resentment. It also probably helped that he'd sent most of his earnings back to his mother to help out in his absence, only keeping what he needed to get by. The only downside was that his grandfather continued to poke at him over his cowardice for all the time he spent avoiding his family. It was good natured, even if harsh, but that was just the old man’s way of welcoming him back.

The job, though, was...odd. He spent most of his time being a guard dog, whatever was happening behind the walls of the old nuclear plant being of a sensitive nature. He really didn't mind all too much, that had only meant easy work compared to the money he made from it.

He should have listened to the rumors, however. The research was experimentation based and he should have questioned what they experimented on. He had been told that what they were doing was going to benefit the whole world, that Japan was in a race against some of the other industrialized countries to solve a simple problem of gigantic proportions. He hadn't given much thought to what that problem could be, he kinda figured it had to do with curing disease. It didn't matter, he didn't ask.

His schedule had changed when another guard had inexplicably perished while working, which should have raised red flags but Ukai was good at ignoring the obvious when motivated to do so. Yet, it had gotten around that Ukai was a good soldier and didn't ask a lot of questions. They were right, of course, except that he didn't ask because he didn't really care. So he had been brought into the securest part of the building and ordered to stand guard.

Against what?

That was a question he should have asked, because the screaming started. Like wild animals trapped in a cage or tortured. In fact, Ukai was pretty sure that was what was going on and he wouldn't lie and say it didn't unnerve him.

However, he was a soldier and good soldiers didn’t shit themselves when the terrifying, bone shattering roars and screaming leaked through the doors. Good soldiers didn't whimper in fear when the sounds of struggle suddenly clang throughout the halls and alarms began blaring. Good soldiers didn't tremble in horror when monsters rampaged and you watch your fellow men fall lifeless beside you, beheaded, gutted, and blood everywhere; on the walls, on the floors and ceilings, on your face and hands making them too slick to pull the trigger of your weapon. No, a good soldier wasn’t so easily broken.

And a good soldier didn't talk.

Not that he would have wanted to. Not that Ukai could have rationally explained the things he saw that night. Not that he would ever admit that those images have been burned into his brain for the remainder of his time on Earth and that he still woke up soaked in sweat and would sometimes have to run to the toilet to puke.
Either way, Ukai’s silence was bought with a hefty severance and the approval to retire early. It was well and good because after that, he didn't think he was cut out for the military. And the government? Well they'd covered up their transgressions by blaming the incident on a malfunctioning nuclear problem and the country lauded the military’s quick action to curb the fallout of an impending explosion.

Hooray and cue the confetti.

In the end, Ukai had returned home to do what he should have done almost eight years prior. He should have stayed and been the good son instead of the good soldier, now haunted by shadows of demons.

But, that was then and this was now, and now he was back, had been back seven months. The old man had known something was up the moment he'd laid eyes on Ukai’s fairly thin frame and the circles that shadowed his brown eyes. Yet, the old man refrained from seeking answers he seemed to know his grandson would be unwilling to give. Instead, Ukai went straight to work at Sakanoshita Store, allowing his mother to retire most of the responsibility to him and working part-time at the farm to help his grandfather.

Things had been going fairly well since then, he'd managed to gain back some of the weight he'd lost thanks to the home cooked meals he'd been unable to enjoy while abroad, and the tormented look he wore when he first came back had softened some.

And then his grandfather had a heart attack.

Ukai took a drag of his cigarette, the heat of tobacco smoke burning his lungs and the ash, bitter taste providing a slight distraction from his troubles. He sighed, the exhale carrying a streak of dark smoke that billowed above him like a storm cloud in the dark room, before dissipating.

Ukai was bored. Bored and frustrated.

He was worried about the old man but felt helpless in his inability to do something, anything, that would make things better. It had been almost ten years since he’d lost his father and he still struggled with that. Losing his grandfather would be no better. But Ukai wasn't a kid anymore and didn't worry about falling into bad behaviors or making rash decisions like he once did. He'd learned his lesson.

Ukai raised the can of cheap beer in his hand, bringing it to his lips to take a long, slow drink, before plopping his hand back down beside him and taking a hit of his cigarette with the other. He was so bored. And a little lonely.

At twenty-six, Ukai had still not found anyone to settle down with. He had never really thought of himself as the domestic type but if he was going to be a grown up with a small business of his own, having a partner might not be such a bad thing. Especially if it meant having sex more often than he was now, the intervals between the few women or men he'd managed to pick up in a small town growing ever longer since leaving the JSDF.

With that thought, Ukai’s neglected member decided to speak up with a twitch of its own. He rolled his head down to look at his crotch.

“I know buddy, me too,” he sighed, staring into his lap, dick half hard already. Ukai shrugged.

“Fuckit,” he muttered in the otherwise empty room, “hello, right hand.”

He gripped his nearly burned out cigarette in his thin lips, held his half gone beer in one hand while
slipping the other calloused hand into his shorts. He started stroking himself with no purpose in mind, only wallowing sadly in the rough pull of his fingers.

His mind wandered, flashes of images, of skin on skin, of hard cocks and wet pussies- nothing sticking or providing any real flavor that sparked the familiar heat in his gut. Not until a pair of glasses and big, puppy dog eyes, shining bright brown and determined popped into his imagination with an irritatingly hot grin aimed at him.

Takeda Ittetsu, modern Japanese Literature teacher at Karasuno High School and current Volleyball Club advisor. Ukai’s dick stiffened decidedly and he snorted. He should probably feel guilty that this man’s image turned him on, and that he was in the process of working up a dirty scene of the smaller man bent over Ukai’s counter in Sakanoshita while Ukai drove himself relentlessly into his ass.

However, what’s a fantasy if not imagining having something you can't. Ukai didn't even know if Takeda was into guys, let alone interested in one with a shady military background.

No matter, Ukai supposed this was payback for all the obnoxious visits the guy had made, barging into his store to pester him about coaching his team. Since Takeda had discovered who Ukai’s grandfather was, and that Ukai had experience as a player under the old man, he’d made it his mission to draft him into coaching. Takeda had little knowledge of the sport as it was which, in Ukai’s opinion, begged the question of why he’d bothered to sponsor the team at all?

Still, as frustrating as Takeda was, Ukai didn’t mind the eye candy when he appeared. He was small, something Ukai preferred in his partners, and his petite frame combined with those big eyes and his nerdy appearance made him all the more appealing.

Ukai thought about what it might feel like to kiss Takeda. He thought about slipping his tongue between his lips and tasting that cocky grin. He wondered how tight Takeda’s hole would feel when he slid his fingers into it and opened him up so he could claim it with his cock.

Ukai’s imagination changed the scene from bending Takeda over the counter to sitting him on it, their chests pressed together and Ukai wondered if the smaller male liked having his neck kissed and bitten. Would Takeda get mad if Ukai left a couple hickies? Does he make noise?

That thought really got Ukai. He ran his palm over the head of his dick, slicking himself up with the excess pre-come that dripped out. He began stroking himself in earnest, tugging from root to tip, thumbing the slit. Ukai groaned and closed his eyes, his jaw dropping slightly and brow furrowing in concentrated pleasure.

He vaguely registered a thing detaching from his lips and he was struck with the sudden realization that he’d been smoking when he’d started jacking off. His eyes flew open and he jumped up, shaking and swiping at his clothes as if he was already on fire, dancing around like a drunken boxer, his still stiff erection flopping comically within his shorts.

His eyes caught sight of the cigarette between the couch cushions, a small dark presence in the dark room, and he snapped it up like he’d just found gold. He stared at it a moment before realizing the stupid thing was dead, fire burnt out some time ago and cold. Ukai glared at the remnant pinched between his thumb and forefinger, and chugged the last of his beer before crushing it in his hand, then stuffed the cigarette butt through the mouth of the can. He leaned over, switching on the lamp, intending to make sure he hadn’t added another hole to the dingy material of the old piece of furniture.

Ukai flinched with the sudden onslaught of artificial lighting, the dim brightness swallowing the room in sickly yellow color. He bent over the couch, inspecting any damage and finding none,
huffed in irritation. His dick had already mostly softened and Ukai just couldn't find the motivation to sit down and try again. He was contemplating grabbing a beer from the fridge when there was an insistent knock on his front door.

Ukai stood, dumbfounded, in his living room in front of his couch, blinking at the door as if he might have imagined the knock. Then it happened again. Rapid little taps, knuckles again hardwood. He grumbled to himself, glancing around for a clock that wasn’t there. Beside his couch on a small table sat his phone next to a cheap lamp. He was too lazy to grab it to check the time on his way to the door. Passing by the kitchen, he tossed the empty can toward the garbage, barely tapping the edges as it hit its mark, and his mind conjured the scene of a crowd losing its shit because he was so cool.

He unlocked the front door, yanking it open just as it dawned on him that he's only in his underwear and a t-shirt and he inwardly sighed at his absent mindedness. Before him stood, unbelievably, Takeda.

Of course. Why would the universe do anything less than have the same guy he'd just been jacking it to show up at his door on a random Sunday evening.

Fuck me, he thought and mentally smiled at the pun while sighing outwardly.

Takeda stood there in black trousers, a white button up and black tie, and a green and white track jacket to finish off his ensemble. He had that same, stupidly cute grin on his face and his eyes were glinting with a challenging light that quickly dissolved into surprise then embarrassment, his cheeks blushing furiously as he took in Ukai’s lack of clothing.

Not Ukai’s problem. He had been hanging out in his own home when Takeda decided to inconveniently stop by.

That's also when Ukai noticed two other men with him. Both taller than the ex-military man and both dressed in dark suits.

Before Ukai could ask why they're at his door, Takeda spoke up, “Sorry to intrude on you, Ukai-san, but do you have a minute to talk?”

Ukai allowed his eyes to roam over the other men, assessing their appearance. Their suits were clean and expensive, though one of them wore his slightly more rumpled. Both carried an expression of passive interest and seemed either not to notice Ukai wearing nothing but a shirt and boxers or didn't care.

Ukai looked back at Takeda’s hopeful expression and stepped to the side, widening the door to let the men enter. They each offered their apologies for the intrusion, Takeda repeating his. Ukai closed the door behind them and waited until they’d slipped off their shoes before gesturing them farther into his apartment.

“Anyone want a beer?” He asked, splitting off into the open kitchen as the other men took a seat, squished onto the couch with Takeda between them.

“No thank you.”

“Um, thanks but no.”

“No thanks, Ukai-san.”

Ukai shrugged and pulled a chilled can from the fridge, popped the tab and took a long swallow as he walked back into his living room and sat down on the floor before the men, legs criss-crossed. He
watched them just as they watched him, all silent, the only noise coming from the television still on in
the background behind Ukai.

It seemed like years before Takeda cleared his throat and leaned forward. Ukai casually watched,
sipping his beer, his eyes glued to the teacher.

“Ukai-san,” Takeda begun, pushing up his glasses with one finger, “thank you for sparing us some
of your time. We sincerely apologize for the imposition-”

“Come off it, Sensei, what are you here for?” Ukai interrupted, not in the mood for formalities. The
way the other two men looked, Ukai was pretty sure this was not about volleyball and their presence
made him more than a little apprehensive. He would prefer to skip past the unnecessary bull and get
to the point.

Takeda flinched at being cut off, recovering quickly enough to raise an eyebrow and smirk, “Okay
then, let me introduce my two associates.” He gestured to his left, briefly looking to the tall, dark
haired male, “This is Asano Tomoyuki, he is a lawyer with Kasa Enterprises,” he gestured to his
right, glancing at the tall silver haired male, “and this is Director Kida Naohiro, geneticist and head of
Kasa’s Department of Genetic Research.” He turned his attention fully to Ukai, “We have a
proposition for you.”

Ukai looked between the three men, wary but more confused. He'd heard of Kasa Enterprises. They
were primarily an investment firm that had their greedy little fingers in a lot of pies and rumor had it
that a few of those pies were less than savory. They had been under investigation on one occasion
for involvement in illegal arms dealings with a paramilitary group somewhere in South Africa.
However, charges were stalled because lawyers were as slippery as eels and as crafty as foxes and
there was a reason why they were loathed, no matter what country they practiced in. The
investigation had been highly publicized, the firm shifting focus to charity work to show their softer
side. People who followed the story either lauded their compassion or condemned them as devils in
expensive suits. Ukai had been on the fence being so far removed from the events.

Or so he thought.

Ukai regarded the men before him deciding he didn't trust them one bit. If Kasa was here, nothing
good could come from whatever they were offering. He picked up his package of menthol cigarettes,
shaking a stick out and pressing it between frowning lips before lighting it, not caring if the three
men would be bothered or not. He sucked in a long drag and let it out before crossing his arms and
narrowing his eyes.

“No.”

Takeda’s face dropped obviously not expecting Ukai to cockblock him before he'd even explained
the details of the offer. He choked a bit on the second hand smoke and leaned forward to defend his
position but was interrupted by Asano.

“Pardon me, Ukai-san, but doesn't it seem a bit presumptuous to decline us before we even discuss
our reason for being here?”

Ukai snorted and choked on the heated smoke that was suddenly sucked into his lungs. He grasped
the cigarette between his forefinger and middle finger, coughing into his other hand, and pointed the
cigarette at the lawyer.

“Presumptuous or not- cough - if Kasa’s come looking for something from a nobody like me then I'm
better off assuming it ain't good and I don't fancy a life sentence in prison when whatever the hell
you're into goes pear-shaped.”

Asano’s mouth tightened into a thin line and one hand fiddled with the Rolex sitting pretty on his wrist, “You’ve heard about the South African incident.” He stated, expression bored as if talking to Ukai was the most uninteresting activity, “A misunderstanding, I assure you. All evidence was declared circumstantial and charges dropped.”

Ukai barked a laugh, “You mean they could make nothing stick.” Apparently he *had* chosen a side of the fence. The lawyer’s eyes narrowed.

“Ukai-san,” Takeda interjected as the tension in the room increased, “just hear us out. I promise you the compensation would be well worth your acceptance.”

Ukai didn't say anything, he had to admit that he was at least mildly curious, even if he planned to refuse them in the end.

Also, Takeda was pretty and Ukai was a sucker for pretty.

“Have you ever heard of the Beta gene, Ukai-san?”

Ukai allowed his eyes to roll over to the scientist. He was the least uptight of them all, leaning back into the couch, one knee hanging over the other, elbow on the arm rest with chin nestled in the ‘L’ of his thumb and forefinger. He looked slightly amused. Ukai stared at him for a moment, apparently he was going to get a lecture. He leaned forward to drag an ashtray near him, flicking the excess ash from the burning cigarette, then settled back on his hand. He grasped the can of beer, cigarette still dangling from his fingers, and took a drink of the bitter liquid. He gestured at the Director with the partially empty can before bringing his arm down to rest against a curled knee, can of beer hanging in the air held by his fingertips, cigarette wafting smoke.

Having been given the okay to continue, Director Kida shifted forward and launched into his lesson.

“The Beta gene is a mutative anomaly that was discovered in 1972 by a German geneticist. It was a phenomena that he came across, by accident no less, when he was researching population genetics, specifically among Croatians. His reasons for this are unimportant, his discovery, not so much.

The Beta gene is unique, you see. You are aware that humanity and certain primates have a similar DNA structure, so much so that it is almost universally accepted that we evolved from them?”

Director Kida paused, watching Ukai, his question not rhetorical. It took Ukai a moment to realize this, having zoned out briefly, bored by the science.

He nodded, “Yeah, we’re all monkeys.”

Director Kida frowned but continued, “It’s not as simple as that but for arguments sake, I'll move on. The point is that, while most scientists agree on our evolutionary heritage, we have still never found anything within our genetic code that connects us directly to primates, or any so-called lesser species. That is until a chromosomal breakdown of a family in Croatia coughed up the startling mutation.

This German geneticist hadn't known what he was looking at and recorded the mutation but put it on the back burner for later consideration. Jump forward five years and he's a professor at a university where one of his assistants is cataloguing his findings and comes across this unknown mutation and takes upon himself to find out what it is.”

Ukai’s eyes were glazing over and he was fighting off a yawn. So far, these guys sucked at promoting their agenda. He glanced at Takeda who listened to the drivel with rapt attention. Ukai’s gaze flickered to the lawyer and found him watching Ukai with an impassive expression. However,
his eyes were sharp and focused on Ukai like he one of those chromosomes stuck under a microscope, and he resisted the urge to squirm uncomfortably. He returned his attention back to Director Kida.

“I'm sorry, Director, I don't mean to be rude but is there any way you could get to the point. Biology was never my strongest subject in school.”

The Director paused in his lecture, mouth hanging open and looking slightly offended that Ukai would refer to his beloved profession as mere Biology. He shook his head and with disappointment ringing his voice he finished, “Canis lupus,” he nearly pouted.

Ukai looked at him, his eyebrows overlapping in confusion. This whole conversation flew over his head some time ago.

“I'm sorry, what?”

“Ukai-san, maybe I can help clear this up,” Takeda offers. Ukai looked at him and tilted his head. The pretty teacher sat up straight, brown eyes bright, his soft lips pulled into an equally soft smile. Ukai’s heart didn’t skip a beat, like in some trashy novel. Nope it didn't.

“The DNA pulled from the family in Croatia contained chromosomes resembling that of canis lupus, or more specifically wolf.”

Ukai blinked at him.

Takeda’s mouth tightened as if suppressing a grin, “Since the discovery of DNA and its structure there has never been a record of a mutation that suggested anything but human until now. Or then, or since.”

Ukai considered Takeda’s words for a moment, allowing his simple brain to process his words, to understand the implications.

He sat up and leaned toward the teacher, “So you're saying that some random European family had dog DNA in them?”

Takeda chuckled, “Essentially, yes.”

Ukai’s eyes widened and he snorted, “No shit?” Now he was curious. Who fucks a dog? A thought occurred to him. “Okay, I know I'm not the smartest tool in the shed, but isn't it impossible for humans to, I don't know, get knocked up by the family dog?”

The lawyer huffed a laugh, apparently amused. Ukai looked at him, a bit surprised since the man had shown so little emotion since he stepped foot in Ukai’s apartment and he was prone to believe he was nothing more than a robot.

Director Kida made a noise in the back of his throat and frowned, again, at Ukai.

“That is correct, in most cases.”

“Most cases?” Ukai questioned, turning his head to focus solely on the scientist and raising an eyebrow.

Director Kida nodded, “This would be an exception. The chromosomes later discovered within the DNA itself was determined to be nearly identical to canis lupus. Ninety-nine percent identical, to be exact. It's the one percent, specifically an unknown protein, we believe that made it possible for the
gene to spread to human offspring.”

“Huh.” Ukai was...well, he wasn’t sure what he was. The information was a lot to take in, it sounded more like something from a bad science fiction movie- people descended from dogs, or wolves, whatever.

Ukai looked at Takeda, “What does this have to do with me?”

“That’s where things take an interesting turn, Ukai-san,” Takeda answered, smiling even brighter now that they had his undivided attention. “After realizing what the gene was, a small group of leading geneticists were brought together to search for more evidence of this mysterious phenomena. They began in Croatia, where it had first been discovered and worked their way from there. Seven years later and they had found evidence of the gene within two percent of the population in Europe.

Unfortunately they’d hit a wall with their findings but an anthropologist heard of their research and combined her efforts in researching historical and cultural accounts of evidence pertaining to people who may have been affected by the gene. It wasn't a large leap to think the mutation may have been a bit more...visible in the past.”

“You mean, like, ears and stuff?” Ukai asked, unbelieving.

“Perhaps,” Takeda answered, grinning at his incredulity.

Ukai snorted. “Right.” He went to take a drag of his cigarette and found it cold and dead, again. Figures. He tossed it in the ashtray.

“Is that so hard to believe?” Director Kida inquired, his head tilted and eyebrows raised.

“Don’t you think it’s a little much for me to believe that a very small population of humans descended from house pets, furry tails and all?”

Director Kida did not approve of Ukai’s sense of humor, his frustration showing in the way his eyes darkened and his mouth pulled down. “There are stories, Ukai, of people with animal traits. Wolf-like abilities from glowing eyes to inhuman growls. From hands with sharp claws to fangs. Strength that no human should posses and a viciousness that made humans fear the dark.”

“If you’re describing werewolves, I’m going to have to ask you to leave. I’m not so easily manipulated, Director Kida,” Ukai glared the the scientist, the lack of formality not lost on him.

Takeda sighed, “Things are not always so simple, Ukai-san, nor are children’s nightmares so easily discredited. The fact is, the gene has all but disappeared and the available evidence sketchy at best.”

Ukai rolled his eyes, how was that not surprising.

“*The fact is*, Ukai-san,” the lawyer finally stepped in, “the gene may be almost extinct, but the key word is *almost.*”

Ukai turned his attention to him and raised an eyebrow, “Almost?”

The lawyer lifted a briefcase into his lap, Ukai had not even noticed he’d arrived with one. He flipped open the latches, the clack-snap of the locks loud in the silence that had fallen over the four men. The lawyer pulled out several folders that Ukai recognized as files of information. He closed the briefcase and set the files on top, placing his hands on them as if to guard them from overly grabby hands. He interlaced his fingers and looked at Ukai.
“The information within these files is of a sensitive nature,” the lawyer started. Ukai tensed, he'd heard similar words before that haunted his dreams.

“The research we’re conducting is sensitive and therefore you are under orders to talk to no one of what we do or what you see.”

“Yes, sir!”

“Perhaps if you were to take a look at these you could come to your own conclusions,” the lawyer continued as he handed over the files. Ukai stared at them, leaning away slightly as if the files contained some sort of deadly virus that he could contract.

“Ukai-san,”

Ukai looked at Takeda whose voice had become soft and low, pacifying.

“Please, we need your help. I need your help, I can't manage this on my own.”

Ukai’s eyes widened but he grasped the files, flipping one open and scanning its contents.

**Patient number:** 1  
**Current date:** 05/17/20-  
**Born:** Hinata Shōyō  
**Father:** Deceased  
**Mother:** Hinata Yumiko, subBeta, has been monitored.  
**Siblings:** Hinata Natsu, non-carrier  
**DOB:** 06/21/20-  
**Current Length:** 162.8 cm  
**Current Weight:** 51.9 kg  
**Notes:** Patient recently admitted due to presentation of first heat cycle. Patient’s mother called emergency response when patient fell in the kitchen and exhibited behavior similar to seizures. Patient then proceeded to engage activity of a sexual nature and was engaged in said behaviors when ambulance arrived. He was aggressive and was given a sedative. Alerted to his arrival, response team procured patient and transferred him to Dr.Uemura’s care. Patient was observed for approx. thirty hours. In that time, patient displayed behaviors consistent with compulsive sexuality, hyper-aggression, and disassociation. Patient eventually collapsed from lack of sleep, nourishment, and dehydration. The episode having passed the patient slept and woke sometime around 1300 within the 29th hour. Within minutes of his waking, the patient began screaming, became aggressive and shouted at staff who entered the room. He was given two extra hours before the staff psychologist approached him.

Heat cycle was completed without difficulty and as expected. Current focus will be on the completion of a heat suppressant in order to control further episodes.

Blood samples were taken, pheromone spike was concurrent with hypothesis. MRI and CAT scans have been completed, awaiting results. EKG normal.

Patient discharged Tuesday, 04/09/20-, at 1500. Will continue to monitor.

Ukai did not know what to think. Heat cycle? He looked up to find the three men watching him intently.
“He’s just one of three.”

Ukai looked at the scientist sure his bewilderment showed on his face. Were they suggesting that this gene actually existed - was alive and kicking in some teen? And not just one but three?!

“There is more information with those files, mostly a summary of my research,” the scientist added, his dark eyes flashing with something almost... sinister.

“You-” Ukai cleared his throat. When had his mouth become so dry? “You still haven't told me what all this has to do with me?”

Takeda jumped in at that question, excitement evident in his posture and on his face, “All three boys play volleyball.”

Ahhh. Right. There it was. Ukai smirked at the teacher, sneaky bastard.

Wait. “All three boys?” he was unable to hide his disbelief.

All three men nodded, but Takeda answered, “Yes. No one has seen a manifestation of an active Beta gene since the latter half of the nineteenth century. This is an amazing find and we have front row seats to observe and study them.”

“But why me?” Ukai was getting irritated that these men seemed to be skirting this very important question. It was the lawyer that answered, finally.

“Because of your military background, Ukai-san.”

Ukai’s head whipped around, his posture defensive now. It wasn't that his participation in the JSDF wasn't public knowledge. However, he had the feeling the lawyer wasn’t talking about his tour in Iraq.

“You were on active duty during the incident in Yamagata, correct?”

Ukai stiffened and he tried to make his expression as blank as possible, “Yes, I was there when the nuclear plant malfunctioned.”

The lawyer chuckled, “Now who’s lying, Ukai-san? We both know there was no malfunction.”

“I think it's time for you gentlemen to excuse me. It's late and I have an early day.” Ukai rose to his feet preparing to escort the men out his door. He didn't know how these men knew about the incident and he was suddenly fearful of what he'd let through his door.

“Ukai-san, I know what we are asking you to do is the last thing you want to involve yourself with, but perhaps this incentive will help ease your conscience.” The lawyer stood and held out a card, a business card, by the looks of it, simply but elegantly embossed. Ukai took it and flipped it over.

His eyes nearly bugged out of his head. That was a lot of zeroes.

What exactly were these guys up too?

Ukai’s grandfather flashed through his head. The amount of money they were willing to part with could help make him at least a little more comfortable.

Ukai sighed, he thought he'd passed the impulsive phase.

“I'll look over the files, but no promises,” Ukai headed toward the door. The men rose and gathered
their few things and followed behind. Everyone was silent.

Ukai opened the door as the men put on their shoes. As they began to file out, Ukai jumped on a thought. Something had been nagging at him since they showed up.

“What if I say no?” Ukai leaned on his door, the chill air of early spring lightly blowing into his apartment, not helping to relax his tense nerves. There was a tang in the air, rain on the horizon, perhaps?

Each man turned to look at him but the lawyer stepped forward and slid a piece of paper out of his inside jacket pocket and handed it over. Ukai didn't even bother opening it, he already knew what it was. The men turned to leave but Ukai reached out and touched Takeda on the arm, stopping him. Takeda turned back to regard him, big eyes questioning.

“How are you involved, Sensei?”

Takeda looked at the hand and then met Ukai’s eyes, his brown ones flashing behind his glasses. He smirked coyly and Ukai’s stomach fluttered.

“You'll just have to accept to find out, Ukai-san. By the way, we pay more.”

With that he turned to follow the lawyer and scientist down the stairs. They had stopped to wait on him, engaged in their own private conversation. As Takeda caught up, they all turned and descended the stairs. Ukai moved to the railing to watch them as they walked to a nondescript black vehicle, the lawyer taking the driver’s seat and Takeda slipping into the back. Moments later they were driving off, brake lights disappearing around the corner.

Ukai was leaning his elbows over the railing. He unfolded the paper and made a disapproving sound in his throat. Conscription papers. Figures.

He really had no choice. Takeda was only being nice by bringing his colleagues, or whatever, and giving him a choice between working for a private firm or the government. Either way, he was locked into a contract.

“Well, this is just wonderful,” he sighed into the air.

Chapter End Notes

Next:

Chapter 7: Smells Like Team Spirit

If you approve of the story so far, please Kudos and/or comment.
Chapter 7: Smells Like Team Spirit

Chapter Notes

BTW, this whole project is un-beta’d so please excuse any errors in grammar. I tried really hard to catch as many as I could.

I will be posting Ch. 8 later this evening when I have peace and quiet. Thanks for your patience.

First Year, High School, Spring

“Hey, Bakayama, wanna practice receives during lunch?” Hinata chirped as he bounced after the tall, frowning male making his way down the stairs.

The Karasuno boy’s volleyball team had just finished morning practice, changed into their school uniforms, and were filing out of the club room to get to class.

“Why would I want to practice with you? My receives aren't the ones that suck,” Kageyama answered matter-of-fact. “And don't call me that,” he added as an afterthought.

“Bakayama! Stingy-yama!” Hinata yelled back petulantly, flailing his short, skinny arms in the air.

Kageyama’s hand shot out, making contact with a head full of untamed red hair. He palmed Hinata’s skull like he would a volleyball, except he was way less gentle, squeezing hard until Hinata was squeaking uncle.

“I wouldn't brag too much, Kageyama. You're receives may be passable but that doesn't mean you couldn't improve,” Daichi interjected as he slipped past the arguing duo, flicking a look of irritation at their unruly behavior.

Kageyama released Hinata immediately who began yelling about going bald and Kageyama bowed slightly at his sempai, “Of course, Daichi-san.”

Tsukishima passed by snickering, “That would make one for the common folk and zero for the King.”

Yamaguchi hid his own snicker behind his hand just as Suga stepped up beside them, patting Tsukishima on the shoulder and smiling sweetly at him. His hazel eyes flashed mischievously as he taunted, “Tsukishima-kun, you could use the extra help, too. You missed quite a few receives during drills, if I remember correctly.”

Tsukishima clicked his tongue, glaring at everyone and no one, increasing his pace and shaking off Suga’s hand at the same time. Tanaka, who’d caught up to the group, cackled along with Kageyama and Hinata at seeing the asshole brought down a peg.

“I'd rather die than practice with those two idiots,” Tsukishima retorted as he walked away.

Kageyama straightened, having doubled over in his laughter, and yelled at Tsukishima’s retreating
form, “That can be arranged!”

Tsukishima replied by tossing him the middle finger as he disappeared inside the school, Yamaguchi hot on his heels.

Daichi sighed in defeat and Asahi gripped his shoulder in comfort and gave him an apologetic look as if he was solely responsible for their behavior.

The team slowly trickled into the building and separated as they headed off to their respective halls for class. Hinata and Kageyama walked together and before they parted ways, Hinata tugged at the sleeve of Kageyama’s gakuran. Kageyama slowed his steps to see Hinata looking up at him with doleful, puppy eyes and he sighed.

“Fine,” Kageyama relented, unwilling to argue with Hinata in the middle of the hallway.

“Yosh!” Hinata exclaimed, throwing his tiny, balled fists in the air for emphasis.

Kageyama rolled his eyes and walked off, leaving Hinata to yell at his back as he made his way to his class.

~O~

So much had happened in the past month and Shōyō was still reeling from the excitement of truly being part of a real team. He’d dreamed of that moment through most of his middle school years and when he’d gone to his first (and only) tournament, he’d been so envious of each team’s dynamics; the way they all trusted their captains or how they depended on their aces. The way they flowed like water, moving together with one mind to accomplish one goal—victory. Despite the fact he’d been super grateful for his friends’ participation and willingness to be his temporary teammates, Shōyō still couldn’t help the yearning he felt to have what so many other players had, a true volleyball team.

It had taken three years, but he’d finally made it to his dream school, walked the same halls the Little Giant’s presence had graced so many years ago. Shōyō wouldn’t lie and say he hadn’t been slightly disappointed at Karasuno’s fallen status, however, he only saw it as a challenge to re-establish the school back to its former glory. Once he’d met his team— all of them— he was certain they’d do just that. He was surrounded by so many talented players and Shōyō believed himself to be the luckiest high schooler alive.

Well, almost. He’d be more satisfied except for two reasons, Kageyama Tobio and Tsukishima Kei, the two most annoying and hateful people in all of Japan.

Hinata had little reason to complain about his life. Yes, he was small for his age, but he never let that deter him from facing challenges head on. He determined to reach beyond his limited stature and exceed others’ expectations of him, refusing to believe he’s incapable of attaining his dreams simply because he’s short. The Little Giant did it, why couldn’t he? So in the face of ridicule and discouragement, Shōyō strove to flourish, to be positive and see each challenge as one more stepping stone to greatness. He felt he proved it too by beating Stingyshima in the practice match and when Bakayama had declared their invincibility. Unfortunately, his two teammates seemed determined to squash his hopes, despite his victories. Their never ending snide remarks and abusive tendencies dug at his confidence. There was a time when someone else’s negative comments would fly in one ear and out the other because Shōyō was always too invested in improving to care what they thought he
couldn’t do. Recently, Shōyō sometimes found himself struggling to hold to his convictions, wondering if they (Bakayama and Stingyshima) were onto something, that maybe he was aiming too high. He wanted to be important to his team, someone reliable, not a hindrance. Even though he made starting player over a few of the second years and despite the fact he played a pivotal role in the team’s offense, having been hospitalized and missing their first practice game with another high school team had really messed with his sense of confidence.

Shōyō sighed and tried to pay attention in class but as usual his mind was wandering. His eyes slipped across the room toward the open windows. The weather had significantly improved in the last few weeks, the last of the winter cold officially melting away into Spring. Warm air breezed in through the windows like a sigh bringing with it the aroma of fresh mowed grass and new flowers. Shōyō would rather be outside in the sunlight, enjoying the beautiful weather in front of a volleyball net before the rains start, than be stuck inside a boring classroom listening to boring teachers and forced to sit still for hours on end.

He sighed again, finding his mind wandering back to less pleasant thoughts with nothing to occupy him and the tedious voice of his teacher as white noise.

He thought about the day he’d stepped into the gym to find his rival serving balls across the court and his subsequent shock when realizing what an ass he was. He thought about their confrontation and getting banned from the gym for a whole week because Bakayama was a jerk. He thought about practicing serves in the growing dark and he thought about meeting Stingyshima.

He thought about his fear when both assholes had challenged each other. He thought about how one moment he was staring at two angry teens, and the next he was staring at two volatile animals, the air around them burning strongly with the intermingled scents of rain and woods and iced lemons on a hot day. He thought about how those scents had clashed and bit at his nose and how he’d been simultaneously intoxicated by them and afraid. He thought about how there was a sudden buildup and release of something that bullied its way in between the currents of the others, soured and sharp and coming distinctly from him. He’d known it then just as he’d known the rain and wood scent came from Kageyama and that the lemons from Tsukishima.

He thought about how both boys had frozen when a whine had forced its way up from his lungs, of how they seemed not to notice how they sniffed the air before backing off one another. He thought about how Tsukishima’s sharp gold eyes dilated when Shōyō’s scent mellowed out as his own anger at the jerk’s behavior reached its pinnacle and he’d forced Tsukishima to acknowledge him as an equal.

He thought about how silent Kageyama had been after Tsukishima and Yamaguchi had left. How Bakayama had watched him, blue eyes intense and thoughtful. How those eyes had sent shivers down Shōyō’s spine from fear or disgust or...or something.

He thought of all of that until those thoughts led him to darker ones, thoughts of warmth and need and…

Shōyō tightly squeezed his eyes shut, fingers curling into fists. His blood pumped loudly in his ears as he inwardly screamed, blocking out the recollections of that day. He refused to think of...that, would not allow his mind to wander there. When he finally relaxed, those memories fading back to the darkness once again, he opened his eyes. White spots danced in front his vision as his eyes adjusted to the light, and his tense muscles slowly unknotted. The loudness of his heartbeat slowed until his teacher’s voice was the only sound in his head.

Shōyō lowered his head to his desk, burying his face in his arms. Truth be told, the part that wears at Shōyō’s confidence the most is that despite the fact Kageyama and Tsukishima are the biggest
assholes he’s ever met, for some reason he can’t stop thinking about them.

Eventually, Shōyō’s mood lifted. It didn’t matter what Bakayama or Stingyshima thought, Shōyō knew he had no limits except what he set for himself. He set those limits high a long time ago and he wouldn’t be stumped by two idiots with bad manners and no social skills.

Still, Shōyō looked forward to practice that afternoon and not just because he’d get to play. Somewhere in the back of his mind he knew he wanted to be around those two assholes as much as he wanted to hold a volleyball. Unfortunately, Shōyō couldn’t understand why.

~O~

Tobio yawned. School was one of his least favorite activities. He couldn't understand why he was forced to sit through seven hours of boring lectures learning seven hours worth of useless information that would ultimately have little to do with his future. Like, who the fuck actually needs Japanese literature?

He turned his head to stare out the window, leaning into one open palm. He tuned out the excitable voice of Takeda-sensei and watched as a hummingbird flitted by, bright green and orange reflecting the sunlight as it searched for nectar. It’s orange feathers reminded him of Hinata’s crazy ass hair.

Tobio huffed. This was becoming a problem.

In the month since school started, Tobio was becoming aware of a growing...interest (attraction?) to his teammate.

It's a fact that pissed him off because no matter how much he thought about it he still couldn’t understand why. The dumbass was nothing if not the most infuriating human to ever walk planet Earth. He’s loud, dumb, had way too much energy, dumb, incompetent, and dumb. Tobio sighed and lowered his head to his desk.

But, he smelled good.

Like, really good.

Like, really, really good.

It hadn't escaped Tobio’s notice that even though the dumbass had the innate talent of getting underneath his skin, Tobio had also found that just being near him had a calming effect on his mood. It didn’t matter how crappy his day could be, one whiff of Hinata’s scent would relax him and loosen whatever tension he’d been carrying between his shoulders. Never mind the fact that the moment the idiot opened his mouth, Tobio felt like smothering him.

It was a mystery to Tobio and one that plagued him constantly. He liked Hinata well enough, he supposed, for a teammate. He’s hesitant to call him...friend…because he’s never really had any of those and Hinata has never brought it up. However, Tobio knows that his weird reactions to Hinata were more than just teammate bonding. He’s not that dumb. He’s just having difficulty specifying the feeling.

The truth is, sometimes the feeling feels bigger than just teammate, or even friend. But Tobio couldn’t process that right now. Even going so far as to say the feeling was friendship was
overwhelming.

The bell rang signaling the end of class and all of Tobio’s thoughts blew out the window as he grabbed his bento and headed off to meet Hinata.

Tobio made his way through the halls as they filled with students. It was a nice day outside, the sky was clear of clouds which made the warm spring sun feel hotter than it was, though many would be finding a place outside to eat anyway, preferring the heat of the outdoors to the stuffy classrooms of the school.

Tobio made a pit stop at one of the vending machines to grab a milk. He dug around in his pocket for the change he needed and had just pressed the button when he heard the shrieking voice of his current emotional conundrum.

Hinata skidded to a halt next to him singing, “Kageyama~” while drawing out the last syllable in a whisper like some people do when imagining a cheering crowd. Not that Tobio would do that. That would be lame.

“Why are you like this?” Tobio asked, his exasperation with the dumbass showed as he stabbed the straw into the milk box and took a hefty swig. He’s gonna need another box of milk.

Hinata shrugged, “Why are you always like you are?”

Tobio stared at him for a second before snorting and shaking his head. Honestly, why was this person causing him so much emotional grief?

He dug around in his pocket for more change, watching the moron as he stood, oblivious to Tobio’s existential crisis. The dumbass was humming a little ditty to himself and smiling at no one in particular. He carried his own bento in one hand and pinned a volleyball between his other arm and hip. A slight breeze blew by, the scent of sweet grass and unidentifiable flowers filling Tobio’s nose, making him want to close his eyes and bask in it.

He sighed and punched the button for his extra milk. Strawberry, that time, he deserved it for all his troubles.

Once he had his drinks in hand, he turned and headed for the grassy spot near gym one. It was the most open space for them to practice though it had little shade. That suited Tobio since he wasn't in the mood to climb trees and rescue volleyballs because the dumbass couldn't receive to save his life. Hinata followed closely beside him, chattering nonsensically about this and that, Tobio barely listened.

“Where’d you get the ball?” He interrupted, hoping to catch a brief break from Hinata’s non-stop jabbering.

Hinata chuckled, the soft sound filled with the kind of joy specific to him, sending a shiver from the top of Tobio’s head and finishing at his toes.

“I asked Noya to borrow his spare one before I came to find you.”

Tobio didn't reply, he wasn't required to. He only continued to walk until they made it to their practice spot, finding it mostly uninhabited thanks to its lack of shade. He was already beginning to sweat in the heat.

He shrugged off his blazer and rolled up his sleeves as they picked a spot to sit and eat before practicing. Tobio sat down with legs crossed and pulled his lunch into his lap, said a quick prayer of
thanks, and shoveled rice into his mouth. He was starving, all his introspection made him hungry.

Hinata took a seat next to Tobio and stretched out his short but toned legs, tapping the toes of his feet together as he hummed in appreciation over the chance to stuff his face. It took Tobio a few seconds to realize he was staring at Hinata’s thighs. He sighed again, covering up his embarrassment by shoving more food into his mouth. What the hell was wrong with him?

“How rude, Bakeyama, you started eating without me. That's impolite.”

Tobio turned his head, the look in his eyes explicit in how done he was with Hinata, and he continued to chew his mouthful of rice.

Hinata glared at him then turned his short-attention span to his own lunch. “Itadakimasu!” He yelled, clapping his hands together, and making Tobio flinch, then proceeded to eat with the enthusiasm of a wild animal. Tobio snorted as he watched and accidentally inhaled a piece of stray rice which triggered a coughing fit.

The moron laughed at him, smacking his back in a shitty way of helping Tobio dislodge the deadly grain, “Don't die, dummy! If you do, who'll toss to me?”

Tobio shook him off, his back stinging from the pounding he’d received. He sucked at his milk, emptying one box and starting on the other.

“Dumbass! That hurt worse than choking and didn't even help!” He hollered at Hinata when he finally had a chance to breathe normally. Hinata had the courtesy to look sheepish before going back to eating.

Tobio watched him for a moment, glaring at the side of Hinata’s face before doing the same and returning to his meal. It didn’t take long until the quiet got to the dumbass and he started talking again, bits of food flying everywhere and his hands waving wildly to punctuate his sentences. It gave Tobio the opportunity to study him without feeling like a creepy pervert.

What was it about Hinata that had him so emotionally unnerved? He was an idiot. His jokes were bad, his skill in volleyball even worse. He constantly challenged Tobio to the most inane things (though he’d never admit he was just as competitive). Yet, there was something that pulled Tobio to him, like gravity or... fate? Maybe?

Tobio inconspicuously took in Hinata’s relaxed posture. The way the thick muscles of his thighs flexed as he wiggled his feet. Hinata was small but after a month of biking back and forth over a mountain, his legs had gained a significant amount of definition, even through his uniform slacks. Tobio had to admire them- had to admire him. He wasn’t admiring Hinata’s legs, even if they weren’t all that bad to look at. But it was only because as an athlete, Tobio could appreciate such things.

Tobio allowed his eyes to move to Hinata’s arms, which were still skinny (and made Tobio smug with pride since his were more muscular), but that fact didn’t subtract from Hinata’s overall...appeal...fuck whatever, moving on.

Then there was his face. Tobio’s eyes roamed Hinata’s profile. The smaller male’s face was rounder than his own, still retaining that childlike look; chubby cheeks, pouty mouth, and big, expressive eyes. Tobio could understand why all of their senpai felt so protective of him. It was almost as if Hinata was cu- and no. That train of thought stopped right there.

Tobio shook his head in irritation and chewed his food as if it had personally offended him.
“What's wrong, Bakeyama?” Hinata suddenly stopped talking about something he had not heard and turned his attention to his partner. His voice softened and his eyes darkened with concern. Tobio felt a fluttering in his stomach but past it off as gas.

Tobio made a weird, agitated noise and growled, “Nothing, Dumbass, I'm fine.” He took a bite of his pork.

“Don't lie, stupid, I can tell something is wrong. You're...different,” he hesitated, his expression switching to hurt.

Tobio was shocked that Hinata would be hurt because he didn't want to share his private thoughts and Tobio wasn't sure if he should be indignant or flattered.

“What do you mean ‘different’?” Tobio asked, tilting his head in confusion as he attempted to shove away his stupid feelings and deflect Hinata’s attention from his intrusive question. Besides, he wanted to know what Hinata meant by ‘different’.

Hinata shrugged and looked away, stuffing more food into his mouth.

Tobio regarded Hinata then stared at his lunch, idly playing with leftover rice grains. “Can I ask you a question?” He spoke up, suddenly overtaken by curiosity.

Hinata chewed his food, cheeks puffed out like a red haired hamster, and blinked at him. Hinata swallowed the mouthful and nodded slowly, Tobio snorted and rolled his eyes.

Tobio took a deep breath considering how best to ask his question. Hinata had called him different but it wasn't in a way you would describe someone’s emotional state. Tobio couldn't really describe what he was trying to define in his mind, but his gut was telling him Hinata could...sense changes the same way as he did. He figured that if Hinata had a stronger and distinctive scent that Tobio could identify, then the same would be true for Hinata. It wasn't a difficult conclusion to come to, it’s just no one had ever broached the subject directly before. Neither he, Hinata, or Tsukishima were close enough as friends to bring up something so personal, well, except for Tobio and Hinata. Although, whatever it was had was only beginning to blossom.

“What do I smell?” Tobio threw out in usual blunt fashion.

Hinata just stared at him, his brown eyes wide with shock. “Uh…” he squeaked, obviously caught off guard.

Tobio tried to be patient and let the question work itself out within Hinata’s thick skull but he was pretty sure he could see the dumbass’s ears smoking, although, that could just be because his ears were bright red. Anyway, Hinata was taking too long so Tobio decided to move the conversation along.

“It's not a hard question, dumbass! Do I smell or not, and I don't mean like body odor?!!” Tobio leaned into Hinata slightly in case he needed closeness for confirmation. Hinata’s own scent filled his nose, the aroma growing stronger and sweeter and it fuzzied Tobio’s brain, making his heart rate spike.

That was...interesting. Still, he had a mission so he filed away Hinata’s reaction to him for later contemplation.

Hinata shoved his hand into Tobio’s face and pushed, growling, “You're too close, asshole!” When Tobio had retreated a few inches, Hinata huffed in irritation before adding, “No, you don't smell.”
Tobio sat back, a little bewildered that his hypothesis had been wrong. His brow furrowed in thought and confusion.

“Are you sure?” He tried to confirm.

“GAHH!” Hinata exclaimed, “You're so weird! You smell fine, jerk!” He went back to digging around in his lunch, but this time it was half-hearted. “You're so embarrassing,” he muttered under his breath.

Tobio watched him and thought about Hinata’s response. A blush had descended across Hinata round cheeks as he stared at his food and the heat in his small body rising as they sat in uncomfortable silence. Tobio tried to ignore how his own face grew warmer and not from the sunlight beating down on them.

“Fine like how?” Tobio pushed, intent on getting a straight answer. Why was Hinata freaked out over such a simple question?

Hinata narrowed his eyes at Tobio and pouted, “What is with you? I don't know, okay?!” He turned his face away, squinting in the sunlight, quiet for a moment before continuing, “I don't know, it's like rainfall in the forest behind my home,” he shrugged. “It smells good,” he added, quietly. He turned his face back to Tobio and smiled awkwardly.

Tobio knew he was making a weird face as he stared at Hinata in bewilderment. It couldn't be helped, the fact Hinata said he smelled good made his heart pound against his rib cage and his chest swell with satisfaction.

Tobio cleared his throat, looking down at his unfinished bento, “You, um, smell good too. Like grass and flowers.” The heat in his face increased, spreading to his ears, as he divulged that secret. God, that was why he avoided most people, conversations like the one they were having were painful.

“Grass and flowers! I smell like flowers?!”

Tobio’s head snapped up, Hinata’s shrill, offended yelling taking him by surprise. Hinata was staring at him as if Tobio had just insulted his mother in the most vile way.

“What?” He flinched, wary of the idiot’s excitability.

“Flowers are so girly!” Hinata yelled, glaring at Tobio and puffing out his cheeks.

Knowing that the bell was going to ring soon and they'd waste the clear day and fresh air, Tobio snatched the volleyball from between them where Hinata had set it while they ate. He swiftly stood up and looked down at the small red head, smirking as he did so into the squinting, chubby face looking up at him.

“Well, to be honest, you are kinda girly.”

With that comment Tobio took off across the field laughing, Hinata flying after him and yelling about showing him who’s girly and kicking his ass.

Eventually they managed to get in a few minutes of practice before the warning bell rang. They gathered their belongings, Tobio sighing regretfully because he never finished his meal, and headed back toward the main building. Tobio was deep in thought when Hinata punched him in the arm.

“Oi, dumbass, what’d you do that for?!” He glared at his teammate while rubbing his sore arm. He'd laugh at anyone who ever insisted that size equals strength. Tobio had experienced first hand, and on
many occasions, just how much of a wallop Hinata could pack in one small fist.

“I’ve said your name like three times, Bakayama. Don’t ignore me,” Hinata demanded, face scrunched in irritation.

“Well if you weren’t so small and girly it wouldn’t be so easy to,” Tobio needled, smirking down at Hinata.

Hinata glowered at him and raised his fist ready to punch him again, but Tobio raised an eyebrow daring the Shrimp to try it while he’s expecting it. Hinata may be strong but Tobio was still stronger.

His unspoken threat worked. Hinata yelped in fear then puffed out his cheeks and crossed his arms, pouting. However, he didn't stay downtrodden long because his expression cleared and he looked back up to Tobio with curiosity.

“Why were you so interested in the way you smelled?”

Tobio shrugged, “I guess because you do. I figured since you have a smell, then I must since I’m pretty sure we’re the same.”

Hinata, surprised, stopped walking and looked at Tobio, confusion clouding his expression. He tilted his head and asked, “The same?”

“Yeah,” Tobio answered, stopping too and turning to face Hinata, “we obviously have the same blood disorder.”

Hinata grew thoughtful, “I was told I was the only one. I can’t believe that someone else exists that suffers too.”

“Suffer?” Now Tobio was confused. As much as he didn't particularly enjoy his disorder, it didn’t really bother him. Except for his monthly jack-off marathons, which he’d learned to cope with, he'd found there could be many benefits. He was extremely fast for his age, just to name one. If extreme masturbation was the only downside to his disorder then he really felt he had nothing to complain about. It's not like he had terminal cancer.

Hinata, on the other hand, appeared to have opposite feelings. He turned toward one of the windows and stared out of it, a sad and wistful countenance upon his face. He turned back and opened his mouth as if to say something, thought better of it, and closed it.

Instead he seemed to come up with something else and he asked, “Do you think Stingyshima is the same? As us, I mean?”

“Does he smell to you too?”

Hinata nodded, biting his bottom lip, and something unreadable but disturbing crossed his face so fast Tobio almost believed he’d imagined it. Whatever it had been, however, made Tobio’s blood boil.

“Does he smell good, too?!?” He demanded, crossing his arms and looming over his small partner.

Hinata’s eyes widened briefly, then he rolled them and grinned, “Jealous, Bakeyama?”

Tobio clicked his tongue and prepared to smack the dumbass in the head but before he could deliver his retribution, Hinata turned down the hall and walked off.
“It doesn’t matter, anyway, dummy! He’s still a dick!” He called back over his shoulder.

Then he was disappearing around the corner toward his class.

Tobio huffed and looked out the window, thinking. He wasn't the smartest person, he knew that, he had the grades to prove it. However, even someone as dumb as him knew that three strangers with the same rare disorder attending the same school was one chance in a million.

Tobio could not chase that rabbit of thought any further because the bell rang again letting him know he was officially late to class.

FUCK!

He turned on his heel and took off, running at full speed and not caring if he got caught. If he was lucky, his next teacher would be lenient and not give him detention for being tardy.

Still, the strange phenomena that were the three first years stayed in the back of his mind. It was a welcome distraction.

~O~

Kei tried not to breathe deep of the lingering scent of sweet grass and gardenias. For one, it mingled with the King’s nasty smell so he’d only get a nose full of that shit along with the Shrimp’s. And two, he refused, refused, to admit he liked how the Shrimp smelled. That was just beyond unacceptable.

Kei pressed the button on the vending machine, slightly harder than intended, to release his orange juice, then slipped in some more yen to get pineapple for Yamaguchi. He bent to retrieve the boxes, inhaling the scent involuntarily. He was at once torn between disgust and sighing in satisfaction. What the fuck?

It was stupid, ridiculous and stupid, how his body responded to that sweet aroma. The way he reacted to Kageyama? That was okay, that guy was a creep and a loser. But the way he reacted to Hinata? Un-ac-cept-a-ble. Period. Double period and exclamation mark.

The Shrimp’s fragrant scent mellowed out the King’s, making it less cloying. Conversely, somehow the King’s scent only made the Shrimp’s sharper, more defined. The springtime scent of fresh grass and flowers bubbled over it and Kei’s skin tingled. He gripped the juice boxes tightly in irritation. It shouldn’t matter how either scent affected the other but despite his resistance, the truth was he hated the idea that the King could make Hinata smell even better. It made him wonder if his own scent affected the pleasant aroma in the same way. He wouldn’t know since none of them have ever spoken about any of it.

Well, at least they hadn’t talked to Kei about it. He was pretty certain that it had come up between the other two. It had to with as much time as they spent together. Alone.

Kei ground his teeth. It wasn’t his concern. He would not continue to think about them. He would not continue to think about the Shrimp. It was stupid.

The sound of offended squealing caught his attention and Kei jerked himself back to the present to realize he’d been so caught up in his head he’d wandered to the field where the King and the Shrimp
were practicing. He must have unconsciously followed Hinata’s scent. At that distance, where he stood next to one of the outdoor storage sheds, the scents of the other two were stronger, headier, and something about that made him bristle with frustration. Kei sighed, he did that a lot lately.

He remained there, watching his two teammates for a moment. Even with glasses he had difficulty making out their faces and if weren’t for the Shrimp’s outrageous hair, Kei would not have given the two a second thought. However, thanks to superhuman hearing abilities, he could pick up on bits and pieces of their conversation.

GAHH!” He heard the redhead yell. “You're so weird! You smell fine, jerk!”

Kei snorted. They were so lame.

The King muttered something and Hinata answered, though warily. Kei observed the awkward exchange with a large amount of secondhand embarrassment. Could they be any more bizarre?

“...it's like rainfall in the forest behind my home...It smells good.”

Kei’s ears perked up at the clumsy confession, his heart rate picking up. They were talking about it. He’d figured they had, or would, and while he’d known that, it didn’t mean the fact of it sat with him any easier. He felt his fingers tighten even more around the boxes of juice and he had to consciously loosen his grip before juice exploded all over him.

“...smell good too. Like grass and flowers.”

Yeah, he couldn’t remain for that any longer. Kei had the uncomfortable urge to run up to them and drag Hinata away to...anywhere, as long as it was away from the King.

Why did he feel like that?!

The Shrimp was only a few degrees more tolerable than the King. They were both dumber than a box of rocks and way too excitable. In fact, Kei was surprised they’d actually figured out they put off scents as much consideration as they give anything other than volleyball. Yeah, it was pretty fucking obvious but they’d been known to be oblivious to much more conspicuous things.

Kei took a deep breath, he could feel his body start to react to the two out in the field, putting out his own scent. He knew he had one though he didn’t know what he smelled like beyond it being tart but not unpleasant, at least to him. Kei had once asked Yamaguchi if he noticed it, but unsurprising his friend had not known what he was talking about.

Kei dragged himself away from the scene in front of him, forcing his burgeoning anger and...jealousy...down. He would not allow those two volleyball idiots to affect him like that. He wouldn’t given them the power. Kei detoured toward the gym they practiced in before heading back to the main building. The ball of unease felt like lead in his stomach making him more irritable. He didn’t like that he was envious of them, it just made his annoying feelings about the Shrimp much more confusing.

Once he reached the second gym, Kei turned and headed around the building. Before he turned the corner, he twisted his head around, looking for any students that might be around. Finding none, he continued toward the club room building, circling around to the back. The area was usually isolated. On his right was the building and on his left, a few yards away, were the woods. Most days no one came out there, though on occasion Kei had happened on a group of delinquent smokers or a couple making out. For the most part, though, it stayed pretty abandoned.

Kei continued down until he was roughly midway and halted. Checking again to make sure he was
alone, he tossed the juice boxes to the ground and turned to the wall. As he thought, the pungent scent of dead wood and mouldy water had dissipated but still hung on like death. It’s been a few days since he’d been back there but it seemed as though the King hadn’t either. Kei couldn’t make out his own scent at all, which pissed him off and made him curl his lip in disgust.

Sometimes Kei wanted to hurt the idiot King. It was almost terrifying how the urge to physically maim him could suddenly come upon him. Kei knew he was warped but he never considered himself a violent person. Normally he avoided confrontation, allowing his natural ability to deter people work on its own. Yet, the King seemed to be the exception, making Kei feel murderous at times, to the point that it scared him he may one day be unable to withhold himself. He really didn’t want to go to prison for murder.

Kei sighed, frustrated, scared, and still swamped under a long list of unanswered questions. He tried to clear his mind as he unbuckled his slacks and pulled out his dick. He took a deep breath and forced his muscles to relax, he had to be quick about this particular activity. Being arrested for indecent exposure would be just as bad as being arrested for the murder of his teammate.

In moments, Kei felt the warm stream of urine mixed with his own scent pouring from him. As soon as the smell hit his nose, he completely relaxed, his body releasing extra pheromones. It was amazing how pissing outside could calm him the way it did, marking his territory (because, let’s face it, that what he was doing) sort of took the place of beating the shit out of his enemy. It was almost as calming as being near the Shrimp.

When finished, Kei stood back to admire his work. The wall and grass directly beneath it were soaked, the liquid his impermanent signature to the King that he’d been there and claimed the area. Of course he’d have to do it again because it would eventually dry and the scent would fade. Also, his Royal Highness would be back to cover it, engaging in their silent struggle of domination.

Kei arranged his clothes, putting himself back together and picking up the juice boxes on his way back to class where Yamaguchi was waiting. He’d have to think of a reason for taking so long.

His walk took him back past the field where the idiots were still hanging out, now practicing receives. Kei didn’t stop but kept walking, watching them from the corner of his eye. The Shrimp never noticed him and Kei tried not to let that bother him.

A small part of Kei, one he refused to acknowledge more than admitting to liking the Shrimp’s scent, wanted nothing more than to claim Hinata. He wanted to mark him for himself, to drive the King back and away from what was supposed to be his.

But as he said, he would never admit to that. He didn’t even understand it.

Chapter End Notes

Next:

Chapter 8: It's Getting Hot in Here

How is it so far? Comments and/or Kudos welcome.
First Year, High School, Spring

It was that time again. Like clockwork, the tell-tale sign that his “rut” was impending. He didn’t know what else to call it, and, according to google, it’s what the experts call the competition between male animals during mating season. He had settled on “rut” only cause it made things more efficient despite the fact it made him seem like a brainless beast.

Whatever.

So, signs:

1. He was fidgety, more than usual.
2. He was angry, a lot and mostly at a certain dumbass who couldn’t get his shit together and a certain asshole who’s snarky mouth was going to find Tobio’s fist shoved inside of it.
3. He was horny. Not the kind of consuming passion that would come when his rut hits full swing, but the kind that distracts him enough to consider his peers on level of attractiveness.

The days leading up to it were stressful. His very first experience, the previous fall, with this particular side effect of his disorder had been terrifying. The thought he’d have to endure the burning rage and lust on a regular basis had been daunting, to say the least. However, over the ensuing months, Tobio found the symptoms somewhat more manageable, the worst moments being the uncontrollable need to fuck something that usually came early on but didn’t last nearly as long as the first two months he’d gone through it. Still, knowing his rut was close made him antsy.

Fortunately, his last one happened right before his high school debut so his first month with his team didn’t start out awkward. Unfortunately, that consolation wasn’t to last as another month passed and Tobio felt the stirrings of another episode beginning. Luckily, his physician had given him a note that excused him each month, one he’d already turned in to the school as forewarning. And, well, that was that.

Still, that month seemed to be moderately unlike his previous episodes. Tobio had been growing used to the consistent signals his body gave him. Just when he thought he’d begun to really get a handle on things, it appeared a new variable surfaced to throw the proverbial wrench into the works. That variable being an entirely new symptom.

Usually, when Tobio started noticing the student population, he reduced them to fuckable parts.
Mostly girls, though sometimes boys because his dick didn’t seem to have a preference, surprise
surprise. He’d check out legs, asses, breasts, backs; whatever appealing body part he found
interesting on any given classmate only to attach it to a faceless being when in need. This time,
however, for the first time, Tobio found himself focused on one individual. And not just any
individual, but one red-haired, idiot who lacked coordination and any kind of game sense.

It was a concerning development. Not that Tobio hadn’t been confused about Hinata before.
However, lately he felt a bit...obsessive. He couldn’t stop thinking about the dumbass, whether
Hinata was near him or not, he overwhelmed Tobio’s thoughts.

And his scent? It hadn’t changed, yet he smelled sweeter, stronger, and it was maddening. When
Tobio wasn’t in his presence he was almost hostile, but being near him was torturous. It would be
creepy for Tobio to bury his face in Hinata’s sweat covered skin, but that’s what he really wanted to
do.

Like now, as Hinata pulled off a successful quick after so many failed attempts. He was so happy
about it he was nearly glowing with pride, the smell of Spring wafting off of him and driving Tobio
insane.

Tobio glanced across the net where Tsukishima faced off against them in a practice match, those
demon-like, gold eyes following Hinata’s every move. A possessive growl built in Tobio’s chest and
his own scent grew stronger and filled the gym. The asshole’s eyes darted to him, narrowing as he
bared his own teeth, his acidic odor combating with Tobio’s own.

“Bakayama!”

Hinata’s shout brought the stand off to an end as Tobio first glanced at Hinata, whose expression
was scrunched in nervousness, then looked around the gym. Their teammates were giving him and
Tsukishima anxious looks as well.

“How many more Goddamn times am I gonna have to yell at one of you?!” Ukai chided, glaring at
Tobio and Hinata, and even Tsukishima, who’d been playing subpar as well. Tobio ducked his head
in embarrassment, he wasn’t usually so off his game. They resumed practice and Tobio forced
himself to focus and they successfully completed two more volleys before everything went to shit.

Tanaka, who was playing against them that time in order to give Tobio a chance to practice setting to
Azumane, went up for a spike. The toss had been executed flawlessly by Suga and Tanaka jumped
to land a hit, his hand connecting with the ball. Tobio and Hinata had rotated to the front and Hinata
was directly opposite, right in the line of fire for Tanaka’s straight. The dumbass’s form was bad
and his blocks were still hit or miss but even Tobio felt bad when he jumped a second too late and
the ball met his face.

It wasn’t unusual for the idiot to take a ball to the face, Tobio was surprised he hadn’t suffered brain
trauma by that point. Still, each time was worrisome enough and this had been no better as Hinata
landed on his back on the hard floor. Of course, most of the team and their coach was on him in
seconds. They called out his name and asked him questions as he eventually sat up, holding his face,
his nose specifically. Blood was seeping through his fingers and his voice came out stuffy and muffled.

“M’fine,’’ He croaked weakly. “S’rry, I wasn’t ‘aying atte’tion.” He whimpered, his voice breaking against the pain.

Coach Ukai sighed and shook his head, his forehead wrinkled in concern and his mouth a tight line of frustration. “Red, you can’t blank out in the middle of a game like that, you’re gonna get yourself killed.”

Hinata looked like he wanted to cry and Tobio wasn’t sure if it was from the lecture, the pain, or both. He was itching to push past his teammates and check Hinata over himself but there wasn’t room to maneuver and his sense of self-preservation told him it was better to stand back then get in Suga’s way as he was currently cradling the injured dummy.

“S’rry, Coach Ukai,” Hinata mumbled, his eyes downcast. He sniffed then moaned in agony, leaning toward Suga.

Coach Ukai sighed, his face softening, “Let’s just make sure you’re okay. You’re gonna need t’see the nurse.” Coach Ukai looked up at the team surrounding Hinata, his eyes questioning, “I need a volunteer to make sure he gets there alright.”

“I can d’it,” Hinata interjected, his head snapping up, the force of it making his head wobble and he groaned. Suga hugged him tighter. Hinata’s face turned green and he whispered, “I think I need to puke,” which made several teammates pull back a little, not wanting to be on the receiving end of Hinata’s sensitive stomach.

“I don’t think so—” Coach Ukai started to say but was interrupted by the asshole.

“I’ll take him.”

All eyes fell on Tsukishima with varying degrees of bewilderment and suspicion. Tobio glared at him, the slight possessiveness of earlier flooding him in intensity now. He had been on the verge of offering to help Hinata but that giant piece of shit had beat him to it. However, Tobio wasn’t gonna let him have his way.

“Like hell you will,” he snapped at Tsukishima, his fists balling at his sides.

The jerk barely glanced at him, clicking his tongue dismissively, “I don’t take orders from his Highness.” His tone was a flat as usual but the heat behind his words was unmistakable, a challenge to his superiority, and the air between them thickened.

Tobio’s hackles rose, “You won’t go near him, asshole!” The amount of rage that immediately washed over him was unprecedented. He tried to reign it in before he lost total control, his body reacting as his teeth elongated, scraping sharp against his tongue, in response to having his territory encroached on. He would claim Hinata before he let that self-righteous, smug dirtbag touch him.

“I will take him, thank you,” Suga’s smooth, pleasant voice interrupted the tense atmosphere. He didn’t raise his voice but his tone left no room for argument.

Tobio’s anger hadn’t left him, despite Suga’s quiet request. The hesitation to cross the vice captain disappeared and he stared down Suga, pulling himself to his full height and sliding into a position of confrontation. Suga was no real competition, Tobio knew that, still, he didn’t like anyone else asserting themselves over Hinata.
Suga continued to watch him and Tsukishima, his gaze not retreating though nervousness tinged his bright, hazel eyes. Tobio side-eyed the asshole and noticed his posture resembling Tobio’s own. The enmity in the gym grew so dense it was beginning to cast a shadow.

“Hey you two morons,” Tanaka yelled, trying his best to intimidate Tobio and Tsukishima, the hesitancy in his action subtle but existent, “respect your damn elders!”

“Hey!” Coach Ukai called out at the same time.

However it was Hinata’s quiet but confident voice that broke through the atmosphere as all eyes turned to him.

“I want Suga-senpai to take me.”

Tobio felt cold, calm wash over him as the need to dominate Hinata rose within him. He took a half step forward before Daichi was in his face, his expression dark.

“Is there something wrong, Kageyama?”

For a second Tobio thought he was going to lose it. No one had the right to get in his way, if they’d just back off he’d take care of the idiot himself and everything would be fine. Tobio glanced again at Hinata who was being helped up by Suga and herded toward the gym’s sliding doors. He wanted to follow, to care for his ma... him, but Daichi’s sturdy frame blocked his path.

Tobio returned his attention to his captain, meeting steel in his solid brown eyes, his stance radiating protectiveness. Tobio truly considered taking him down and showing him who’s in control, who had the power, but he’d long ago deferred to Daichi’s leadership and challenging him now would only cause more of a rift between him and his teammates, not to mention most likely get him kicked off the team. Tobio shook his head, the motion imperceptible except to Daichi, before stepping down.

Daichi’s attention rolled to Tsukishima and Tobio was vaguely aware of the same issue between them. His focus was on the look Hinata threw over his shoulder as he was led out of the gym with Suga’s arm draped protectively around his shoulders. His big, brown eyes flicked between him and Tsukishima and held a mixture of wariness and... longing. At least, what Tobio assumed was such since he’d never been on the receiving end of a look like that. It stirred up another rush of anger and as Hinata disappeared, Tobio turned his wrath on the only available option.

“What the **FUCK** is your problem, Tsukishima?!” He snarled, rounding on the asshole with all the force of his fury.

“KAGEYAMA!” Daichi bellowed, but it was too late. Whatever rational thought Tobio had left in his brain vanished with red hair as he came face to face with Tsukishima’s smug loathing.

Tsukishima squared his narrow shoulders and tilted his head, affecting a fake innocent expression, “I’m sorry, your *Highness*, but are you, in fact, blaming me for what happened?” Tsukishima took a bold step forward until he was inches from Tobio.

“Boys!” Coach Ukai called in warning.

“ENOUGH!” Daichi demanded, his patience long gone.

Tsukishima continued as if neither their coach or captain had spoken, “Because as I see it, if you had just backed the *fuck* off, things would have gone a lot smoother.” The asshole raised a hand to punctuate his sentence with a bony finger digging into Tobio’s chest, driving each point home harder and harder.
“Tsukki…” Yamaguchi cautioned with worry.

“H-hey guys, I think we should calm down. No n-need to let things get out of control,” came Azumane’s timid voice.

“Right?!” Noya-san yelled in agreement. “This kind of behavior isn’t manly at all!”

“Y’all need to respect your elders, jerkwads! Don’t make me get involved!” Tanaka followed up.

The gym was quickly descending into chaos with teammates either demanding things or trying to get control of the situation.

“Don’t touch me, Tsukishima,” Tobio commanded, locking eyes with him. Tsukishima’s were darkening, the honey-gold deepening to rival the sun’s corona, yellow and burning.

Tobio felt the growl start deep within his chest, slowly growing both in ferocity and volume. Tsukishima returned it, and Tobio noticed sharp teeth as his lips peeled back. Tobio bared his own, taking slow steps to the right, Tsukishima to the left. As if he was on the court about to set the ball, Tobio’s awareness boiled down to the enemy challenging his dominance over the gym, his brain working overtime to calculate weaknesses.

Tobio had tried to put up with Tsukishima’s insults, his sarcastic mouth, his I’m-better-than-you attitude. He’d taken it all in stride, determined to cope as well as he could so he could remain on the team, to try and overcome his past mistakes. This was the last straw. Tsukishima had overstepped the boundaries and tried to take Hinata away from him and now Tobio would take blood in revenge.

The moment Tobio grabbed the other’s practice jersey, he felt Tsukishima’s long fingers grip his. Tobio could see in his periphery as Tsukishima brought his arm back, the same as Tobio, prepared to do damage as well.

However, before either of them could land a blow, strong arms grabbed Tobio around his shoulders, his waist, taking him to the floor and pinning him there. White hot rage burned beneath his skin, his vision blacking out as he struggled to fight back, growling obscenities and gnashing his teeth. A second later, a heavy object weighed upon his chest, then the sting of a hard slap against his cheek, the pain of it jarring him back to rationality. His whole body went limp and his vision returned. Able to focus, Tobio looked up in shock at Daichi who was sitting astride his torso with the collar of his shirt in a meaty hand, the other red from connecting with his face.

“Have you calmed down?” His captain questioned low and threatening, his body tense as if he might have to hit Tobio again.

Tobio looked around and fear hardened into ball that sat in the pit of his stomach. He looked at Tsukishima who was standing several feet away, his hands up defensively as Coach Ukai berated him. Tsukishima glanced back, his detached expression plastered to his face except for his eyes. They betrayed the same fear Tobio felt, though he didn’t know if it was directed at him or Tsukishima.

“Kageyama!” Daichi’s cold tone dragged Tobio’s attention back to his captain who was awaiting an answer. “I asked you if you were calm. I would hate to have to beat the shit out of you otherwise.”

Tobio nodded, thoroughly subdued and mortified, whatever anger he’d felt had melted away. Kind of like his chances to remain on the team. What the hell had gotten into him?

Daichi nodded brusquely, hesitating before finally sliding slowly off him as if Tobio were a time bomb that hadn’t been successfully deactivated. Tobio slowly rose to his feet noticing a few of his
teammates still standing by in case he flipped out again. He stood before them completely cowed, his head bent in shame and arms limp at his sides. He wanted to run away, as far as he could. He’d never attacked anyone before, no matter how angry he’d been. He’s yelled and threatened, he’s even gone as far as punching a locker or two, but he’s never lost it like that. How did he even begin to come back from this?

“I-I’m sor-“ he tried to apologize but was interrupted by Coach Ukai.

“I think you should take the rest of the afternoon off, Kageyama,” he suggested though it came off more of a command. Tobio could only nod, his vision blurring as his chest constricts and tears pool in the corners of his eyes. He turned to leave, reluctant and unwilling to look anyone in the eye but Coach Ukai’s gravelly voice halts him in his steps.

“I will have to speak with Takeda-sensei and your captain and vice before letting you return to practice. Take that time to consider your behavior.”

Tobio sunk further into himself and didn’t respond. He slunk to the gym doors like a whipped pup, grabbing his shoes as he went, barely taking time to change them out. He didn’t even bother grabbing his gear. As soon as his feet hit dirt, Tobio takes off.

Despite the circumstances, the time away is a godsend since less than twenty-four hours later Tobio’s rut incapacitates him.

~O~

Ukai turned to the remaining players, pinching the bridge of his nose in frustration. He didn’t want to deal with any of this. Handling children was like trying to wrangle bees, you may get them to cluster together but one wrong move and you’d be stung to death. He dragged a hand down his face, half of it covered while he gripped his jaw in his hand trying his best to think of a way to salvage the situation.

The files he’d received only served to confirm that the people he worked for had absolutely no idea what they were doing. The information they’d gathered on each teen, while interesting, was absolutely useless in situations Ukai had just faced. He’d been warned that violence could become an issue and to involve himself as little as possible, helping Takeda observe natural behavior while limiting risk to civilians.

Su-re. Easier said than done when two of your subjects were ready to literally kill each other. Ukai sighed again.

“I’m cancelling practice for the remainder of today. Feel free to practice individually but I need to talk to Takeda-sensei. Daichi, come with me.”

Takeda had not been present for the incident, a fact that frustrated Ukai. He was no researcher. Still, he would relay the whole thing to his so-called partner with as much detail as he could remember and hope that Takeda could parse out the important parts.

Fuck, he needed a cigarette. And a beer.

Ukai considered stepping off school grounds for a moment to get his fix of nicotine real quick but decided against it for the sake of time. The longer this took, the less he would remember things as
they happened.

Ukai didn’t wait for the captain to follow him. He switched out his shoes and followed the catwalk to the main building. As he stepped inside the doors he heard the heavy footsteps of the teen he’d beckoned trailing after him, quiet as the night. Despite having graduated more than half a decade ago, Ukai still remembered where the teacher’s offices were located (nevermind having been called into those offices on more than one occasion), and before long he was outside the door. He slid it open, reflexively wincing as if he was still a student. Shaking off old memories, Ukai stepped inside to find it mostly unchanged and mostly empty except for Takeda and a few lingering teachers, none of whom he knew. Just as well, he really didn’t want to walk down memory lane with any former teachers who’d remember his bad habits and the resulting detentions.

Takeda was bent over his desk, collecting work to take home for the evening. He turned as Ukai and Daichi stepped into the office, friendly smile on his face.

“Oh, Ukai-san, I was just about to head to the gym. Sorry, I got caught up in a student meeting…” his explanation trailed off as the dark expression Ukai and the captain wore made him tilt his head in concern. “Did something happen?”

Ukai’s eyes flickered briefly to the kid standing beside him in stiff silence. He rubbed the back of his head, hesitant to say anything where he may be heard.

“Is there anywhere we could talk more privately, Sensei?” Ukai requested hoping the atmosphere would be easily interpreted by Takeda’s usual skills at observation.

“Oh, Ukai-san, I was just about to head to the gym. Sorry, I got caught up in a student meeting…” his explanation trailed off as the dark expression Ukai and the captain wore made him tilt his head in concern. “Did something happen?”

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“Is there anywhere we could talk more privately, Sensei?” Ukai requested hoping the atmosphere would be easily interpreted by Takeda’s usual skills at observation.

“Uh, sure. No problem,” Takeda answered, glancing at the remaining teachers who watched them with curiosity. “Follow me.”

Takeda led the way out of the office and down the hall to the room used for guidance counseling. He unlocked the door and pushed it aside, stepping back to let Ukai and Daichi enter first. Ukai took up position by the window, staring out at the late afternoon sky while Daichi sat opposite Takeda, a table between them.

Tense silence filled the spaces between them as they all settled into their places. For a while, no one spoke. Ukai continued to stare out of the window and Daichi sat, slumped, with his strong arms crossed, not really looking at anything. When Ukai finally looked over at them, he noticed the kid flexing his fingers, probably remembering how he’d struck one of his players, his own teammate, his kohai.

Ukai, took a breath, intending to begin, but Takeda broke the silence first.

“Who wants to tell me what’s going on?” He asked, his head swinging back and forth trying to address both of them at once.

Daichi sat up to face Takeda but his eyes landed on Ukai who nodded. Daichi cleared his throat, obviously nervous.

“Kageyama attacked Tsukishima,” he informed Takeda. Ukai couldn’t see his expression from where he stood but he could feel the moment Takeda’s body tensed. He imagined those big, brown eyes growing wide with thinly veiled excitement. Ukai hoped that Takeda had enough wherewithal to reign in his eagerness in front of the kid. Poor thing was having a bad day. However, it appeared Ukai had nothing to worry about as Takeda spoke up, his voice steady and lacking any obvious signs of delight.
"Is that so, Daichi. Why don’t you start from the beginning and tell me exactly what happened."

Thirty minutes and a few pointed questions later, the captain was exiting the cramped room and closing the door behind him. As soon as they believed Daichi out of earshot, Takeda collapsed into his hands and sighed, all traces of quirky, friendly teacher vanishing to be replaced by the detached, clinical researcher.

“I can’t believe I missed it,” Takeda complained, steepling his fingers in front of his face.

Ukai watched him from his position by the window. He could only observe from behind but he could still appreciate the view. He didn’t know if the teacher worked out, Takeda had narrow shoulders but he didn’t seem soft and Ukai often imagined how his arms looked uncovered. Takeda also had a head full of silky looking hair. From where Ukai stood he could probably run his fingers through it without having to move his body.

Takeda swung himself around so he could face Ukai, leaning on the back of the chair with an elbow and crossing his legs. Ukai let his gaze momentarily drop to the teacher’s thighs before dragging it back to the window.

Goddammit, he needed to be less desperate. This was not the time to be thinking of sex.

“What’s your take on the situation, Ukai-san?” If Takeda noticed Ukai checking him out, he ignored it. That was just fine and dandy. The last thing Ukai needed was to complicate things with any kind of attachment. No matter how cute the scientist was.

Ukai sighed, “Can I open a window? I really need a cigarette.”

Takeda gazed at the clear glass then back at Ukai and shrugged nonchalantly, “I don’t give a damn what you do in here.”

Ukai chuckled as he pried open one window before pulling out his pack of menthols and shaking out a cigarette. He could feel his mouth watering and pulse spike in anticipation. It’d been too long and he was really wired.

“Just don’t get caught, Coach. Wouldn’t be appropriate behavior to model for the children.”

Ukai paused as he was going to light the smoke, catching the coy smirk on Takeda’s attractive face. His heart rate picked up speed again and not just because he was about to inhale cancerous fog. He felt his ears heat up and covered up his embarrassment by snorting at Takeda’s teasing comment. The lighter sparked and a second later the flame lit the end and Ukai took a long overdue drag. He exhaled the toxic smoke and sighed in contentment, already feeling one hundred times better.

“I’ve never been good with appropriate,” he retorted, grinning back at Takeda.

“Hm,” Takeda bit his bottom lip, his big brown eyes half-lidded and Ukai felt a familiar heat gather behind his bellybutton. If he didn’t dissolve the electricity building between them, he couldn’t be held responsible for what he might do. However, he wasn’t altogether sure if wanted the atmosphere to go away.

Either way, Takeda effectively broke the tension by shifting his gaze out of the window. Ukai was immediately disappointed and he cursed himself for being so fucking needy.

He needed to get laid. By someone other than Takeda, unfortunately.

“You never answered me,” Takeda’s serious tone dragged Ukai from his lonely thoughts. His eyes
focused on the scientist who was staring back, intense now and ready to discuss the earlier confrontation.

“What was that, Sensei?” Ukai had totally forgotten what he’d asked about.

“What was your take on the situation?”

“Oh, yeah,” Ukai hesitated as he finished his cigarette and flicked it out of the window. “It was pretty much as the captain described.”

Takeda’s expression fell in disappointment, “So nothing that you would have noticed that may have set them off?”

Ukai went silent as he thought back on the moments before the fight. Practice had started off relatively normal, Ukai arriving about twenty minutes into practice. Daichi had already led the team through warm ups and a few laps around the gym. He’d had them working on receives as discussed in preparation for their upcoming practice match with Nekoma at the end of Golden Week. Ukai had watched from the sidelines as everyone had their turn with receiving before he made them all practice spiking. Afterward, he split them into teams for a practice match. Not at all unusual.

Well, not if you don’t count their subjects. Looking back, Ukai did notice a few slight differences, some strangeness between the three first years.

There was always a moderate amount of tension between Kageyama and the tall, bitchy blonde guy. In the two weeks Ukai had taken over, he’d grown used to the animosity that ran between them, it was expected according to the files. However, that day there seemed to be a bit more...hostility than usual. It’s not so much in anything they said to one another, it was more the air around them, the way it felt as if the two teens had been circling each other all practice, digging at weaknesses. That was before they physically clashed.

Red, too, seemed to be affected by it. He was more hyper than usual and anxious, either distracted by one boy or the other or spacing out. Ukai had to yell at him more than normal to keep his focus. The other two appeared to pick up on Red’s behavior or something because when they weren’t glaring and snarling at each other, they were watching Hinata with almost obsessive focus.

It had been weird.

“Actually,” Ukai began, Takeda’s head whipping up in eager anticipation, “now that you mention it, Sensei, the boys were acting really odd today.”

“Odd? How?” Takeda sat up straighter, all his concentration on Ukai as he waited for him to explain.

“Well, Kageyama and the blonde-”

“Tsukishima,” Takeda interrupted.

“Right, Tsukishima. They seemed on edge today and not the usual aggressiveness. This was more territorial, like two dogs stalking each other over ownership. And, now that I think about it, it all seemed to be centered on Red.”

“Hinata,” Takeda helped again and Ukai rolled his eyes.

“Hinata,” he emphasized then continued. “He’s always a little over eager but his energy level appeared to go through the roof today but it wasn’t focused on practice or the game. I don’t know, it was all just really fucking crazy.”
Takeda didn’t respond for a while. When he did, his forehead creased in contemplation as he asked, “What day is it?”

Ukai had a very brief impulse to trace his fingers over the fine lines. He thought the expression on Takeda’s face looked especially adorable but instead he only shrugged his shoulders, “Thursday, why?

Instead of answering, Takeda’s eyes searched the room for something, his whole body trembling in excitement. Finding what he’d been looking for, he stood up and walked to a calendar hanging on the wall. He pulled it off the hook, ignoring the pin that dropped to the floor, a potential hazard if anyone were to step on it. Ukai ignored that little fact as he watched Takeda with amusement.

Takeda flipped through several months, his lips moving as he held a silent conversation with himself.

“Well, I’ll be damned,” he finally said, turning his attention to Ukai.

“What’d you find, Sensei?” Ukai leaned forward to take a look at the calendar, wondering if he’d see the same thing.

“I can’t believe I forgot about it. Kageyama is about to go into *rut*,” Takeda smiled mischievously.

For a moment Ukai only stared at him in confusion trying to remember the meaning of the term. When it dawned on him he couldn’t help the giant shit-eating grin that spread across his face.

“Holy hell, he wants to fuck Red.”

They both went quiet at that declaration before falling into hysterical laughter.

Ukai didn’t know how long they laughed, the whole thing was absurd and every time he thought about it, a fresh wave of mirth rolled over him. *Rut* was that period of time when Kageyama, an Alpha, was focused on mating the only available Omega, Hinata.

When he’d finally settled down enough to speak coherently he choked out, “I can remember being a horny teenager and that was bad enough. I almost feel sorry for him, he must be so confused and frustrated.”

Takeda was still smiling wide, “And not just him. Tsukishima will eventually succumb to his own *rut*. According to the files on them, both Kageyama’s *rut* and Hinata’s *heat* fall around the same time.” Takeda’s expression got contemplative, “I wonder if Kageyama was reacting to Hinata and trying to assert his claim?”

Ukai thought back on the situation, trying to connect the dots between their strange behaviors. “When is Tsukishima supposed to have his?”

Takeda considered his question and answered, “Um, I think somewhere around the middle of the month…” He trailed off, lost in thought.

“So there’s a possibility of this situation happening again? Damn. We’ll have to prepare in order to get ahead of it. We can’t let them brawl every month, the team will collapse under that kind of disruption.” Ukai looked at Takeda for agreement but the scientist was not paying attention, his brow was furrowed with a distant look in his bright, brown eyes.

“Takeda? Hey Takeda!” Ukai waved his hand before Takeda’s face trying to get his attention.

Takeda flinched and shook his head, eyes refocusing, “Sorry Ukai-san, I was just thinking. You said
both Kageyama and Tsukishima were challenging each other, correct?”

“Uh, yeah, sure,” Ukai confirmed. “They were more hostile toward each other than usual. Why?”

Takeda blinked at him, his expression blank. He shook himself again and inquired, “I wonder if these occurrences affect each other?”

“I’m not sure what you mean, Sensei.”

“Well, it has been known for heats and ruts to trigger each other. What if that is what is occurring and each boy is reacting to the other’s pheromones? It’s very likely.”

“Does that mean they’re gonna go through all of this at the same time? Cause that would make things easier. Get it out of the way all at once each month so the boys can focus on Nationals.”

Takeda watched Ukai, his face cool and impassive unlike his normal adorable (if not sorta fake) happy expression.

“Ukai, need I remind you of our purpose here?”

Ukai scoffed, sometimes he forgot that Takeda was first and foremost a researcher. His loyalty to those kids extended only so far as it affected the subjects and he could really care less about their actual goals. Something about that struck Ukai the wrong way. Ukai may find his assignment interesting, but that didn’t mean he had to treat the kids like they were lab rats.

Ukai hardened his own expression, squaring his shoulders and crossing his arms over his chest, “You may have hired me to play security but as far as I’m concerned, that doesn’t make me any less of a coach. I intend to see this job through but I also plan to help these kids win Nationals. If that somehow gets in the way of your little experiment, feel free to find another ex-military volleyball player. I didn’t want the job in the first place.”

Takeda considered him for a moment, his eyes behind his black frames dark and intense, as if Ukai were a subject himself for observation. “As long as we agree the research comes first, Ukai-san,” Takeda eventually replied.

“Sure, Takeda, it’s what I was hired for,” Ukai didn’t acknowledge how he was generously being compensated was left unstated. Ukai wanted to cringe, the new tension building between them was not the kind he wanted. He preferred the underlying attraction that encouraged flirtatious teasing. This was just uncomfortable and reminded Ukai of what he ultimately couldn’t have.

Takeda’s features gentled and he smiled softly, “Well then, perhaps we should think of how to deal with this so the team stays together.”

Ukai frowned, he didn’t like that Takeda could use the team so easily and without conscience. Regardless, he was right. Behavior like that was unacceptable under normal circumstances, but for the sake of the team and the research, they couldn’t afford to lose any of the trio. They were just going to have to find a way around it all.

“Have any suggestions?” Ukai asked.
Next:

Chapter 9: So Take Off All Your Clothes

Kudos/comments welcome!!
Chapter 9: So Take Off All Your Clothes

Chapter Notes

Here's a sort of early update. It's been done for two weeks and just hanging around.
Enjoy!

BIMB :)

P.S. The song lyrics as titles is a happy coincidence. I don't think that'll last.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

First Year, High School, Spring

noyabusiness created WTF Daichi group chat

noyabusiness added Dadchi, Sugacube, crybaby, shartank, ennofurshii, noritodorito, Kindoll to the group chat

noyabusiness: what’s up my homies

shartank: bro! the fuck is this

Dadchi: no, guys, i cant handle this

Dadchi: i hate this screen name btw

Sugacube: but ur name fits u so well ( ो‿ो)

Dadchi: suga no

Sugacube: suga yes (≥₀≤)

shartank: (♀‿♀)

noyabusiness: (◕‿◕✿)

Dadchi: stop. it.

Dadchi: you two arent even cute

noyabusiness: rude dadchi

shartank: yeah rude old man

crybaby: at least urs isnt cruel, daichi
noyabusiness: but its accurate
sharktank: asahi my dude!
Sugacube: leave him alone noya
crybaby: thanks suga
Sugacube: he cant help hes oversensitive
crybaby: nvrmind
sharktank: burn!
noyabusiness: burn!
crybaby: u guys are mean
Dadchi: please don’t make our ace cry
crybaby: i am both grateful for ur support and offended by ur statement daichi
Dadchi: as long as u dont cry
noyabusiness: (*・゜・*)
Sugacube: (*・゜・*)
sharktank: (*・゜・*)
crybaby has left the conversation
crybaby has been added to the conversation
noyabusiness: dont be that way asahi
noyabusiness: u kno we luv ya
sharktank: ———^ 
Sugacube: ———^ 
Dadchi: ———^ 
naritodorito: What’s up, guys?
Sugacube: narita!
noyabusiness: where ur clones at
sharktank: narita my man! hows it hangin?
crybaby: hello
naritodorito: I am assuming, Noya, you mean Ennoshita and Kinnoshita. I haven’t a clue.
naritodorito: And we are not clones. If we were, Kinnoshita would be smarter.
ennofurshit: Hey guys
sharktank: ouch dude haha
Sugacube: haha I thought I was mean
ennofurshit: Asahi you are not a cry baby
crybaby: thanks ennoshita
ennofurshit: d(^.^*)
noyabusiness: suck up
ennofurshit: Suck it
noyabusiness: if ur offering
sharktank: dude
Dadchi: dude
naritodorito: Dude.
Sugacube: hahaha (ง'̀-'́)ง
Kindoll: sup
Sugacube: ruh roh shaggy
Kindoll: hey asshole!
Sugacube: haha (ง'̀-'́)ง (ง'̀-'́)ง
noyabusiness: (*≥.dequeue≤)
sharktank: (*≥.dequeue≤)
crybaby: (*≥.dequeue≤)
Dadchi: really asahi
crybaby: *shrugs* when in rome
Dadchi: okay before this group descends into meme hell
sharktank: save me from
noyabusiness: this meme hell
Dadchi: exactly

Dadchi: why the hell are we here noya

noyabusiness: well dad

Dadchi: dont

Sugacube: Daddy

Dadchi: NO

noyabusiness: i have brought us all together on this day

noyabusiness: to discuss our brothers

sharktank: preach it

noyabusiness: and the sins they committed

sharktank: yeah preacha tell it

Sugacube: *plays organ*

crybaby: u guys r stupid

Dadchi: agreed now please get on with it

noyabusiness: and how they defiled the holy ground upon which our gym sits

noyabusiness: wtf daichi y werent they expelled

sharktank: or at least suspended for more than one wek

naritodorito: ^

ennofurshit: ^

Kindoll: ^

Sugacube: plz narita u only want tsukishimas position

sharktank: called out!

naritodorito: no!

naritodorito: ok maybe...

Kindoll: why isnt yamaguchi here

ennofurshit: yeah this affects him too

noyabusiness: u mean saltishimas lapdog
crybaby: thats kinda harsh noya

noyabusiness: again accurate

naritodorito: ^

shartank: ^

Sugacube: ^

Dadchi: suga!

Dadchi: moving on

ennofurshit: i think you guys are being a little cruel. just because tsukishima is only nice to yamaguchi, doesnt mean yamaguchi is some sort of brainless follower. theyve been best friends since elementary.

noyabusiness: dude tldr

Sugacube: tldr

sharktank: tldr

naritodorito: TL;DR

Kindoll: tldr

crybaby: ...tldr...sorry

ennofurshit: see if i help you again, asahi.

Dadchi: MOVING ON

Dadchi: there are about 600 things id rather be doing right now than having this pointless conversation

Sugacube: tldr

noyabusiness: tldr

crybaby: tldr

sharktank: tldr

naritodorito: TL;DR

Kindoll: tldr

ennofurshit: tldr

Dadchi: i hate every one of u

sharktank: srsly tho why are they still on the team
noyabusiness: ^ did u notice it took like 4 of us to hold down kageyama

ennofurshit: yeah i got scratched

ennofurshit: thought that guy kept his nails short

ennofurshit: see him with a nail file all the time

noyabusiness: ^

sharktank: fuck that did u notice his teeth

sharktank: dude had straight up fangs

noyabusiness: ^^^

Sugacube: its outta our hands guys

Sugacube: we gave our rec but the ultimate decision is ukais

Dadchi: yeah and there are also circumstances we cant tell u about

Dadchi: plus they can’t miss out on golden wk training camp

Dadchi: but they will be on probation until further notice

noyabusiness: wtf

ennofurshit: ^^^

crybaby: they frighten me

Dadchi: how are u an ace

crybaby: ...thats not nice daichi

noyabusiness: ^ again accurate

crybaby: t(=n=)

sharktank: get em asahi haha

Kindoll: so that it we just play with them like nothing happened

Dadchi: pretty much

naritodorito: What about next time?

sharktank: narita u kno its like a privilege in our generation to use improper grammer right

naritodorito: That’s why your in class 1.

Sugacube: oh the burn
shartank: 🌺 📡

crybaby: suga ur such an instigator

Sugacube: 🌺 🌺 🌺 i have no clue wat u mean asahi

Dadchi: we have been assured that the first years will be on their best behavior

noyabusiness: riiight assurances

crybaby: seems a little lenient

Kindoll: so they get away with it and still maintain their positions

sharktank: kinda unfair considering what happened with noya

noyabusiness: ^ right ().__)

Dadchi: guys let me ask u this

Dadchi: how well do u think wed do without them

Kindoll: .....true

sharktank: .....true

naritodorito: .....Okay

crybaby: .....true

ennofurshit: .....i understand

noyabusiness: ....

Sugacube: noya

noyabusiness: ...im thinking...

Dadchi: noya...

noyabusiness: fine

noyabusiness: but if they act up again I’m cracking skulls

Dadchi: fair enough

Dadchi: were all agreed

Dadchi: Nationals is important enough to overcome this

Sugacube: u kno I got ur back daichi

crybaby: me too i wont run again
**sharktank:** I got ya boss

**Dadchi:** itas

**ennofurshit:** we won’t abandon you again, you can count on us.

**naritodorito:** Okay

**Kindoll:** yeah

**Dadchi:** ...nishinoya...we need our guardian

**noyabusiness:** ...whatever

**noyabusiness:** for nationals

**Dadchi:** for nationals

**noyabusiness** has signed out

**crybaby** has signed out

**sharktank:** l8r bitches

**sharktank** and **naritodorito** has signed out

**Kindoll** has signed out

**ennofurshit** has signed out

**Sugacube:** u alright daichi

**Dadchi:** this whole situation is screwed up

**Sugacube:** wanna talk about it

**Dadchi:** nah im ok

**Sugacube:** goodnight daichi

**Dadchi:** goodnight suga

**Dadchi:** thanks

**Sugacube:** (*∩̯̯̯*)

**Sugacube** has signed out

**Dadchi** has signed out

-O-
Kei didn’t think it was completely fair that he be held responsible to the same degree as the King. So he antagonized him, maybe pushed things too far. He’s always had difficulty controlling his hypercritical tongue, so what? He’s never hid the fact he despised the King, so how was it his fault that he popped off at the mouth when the King decided to pick a fight?

Kei sat at his desk the following afternoon, pissed that he’d been called to the guidance room during lunch. He was told that the King had been suspended from club activities for the remainder of the week because he’d acted out first, however, both would be put on probation indefinitely until they could prove to be teammates instead of enemies. Takeda-sensei explained that they were lucky he wasn’t involving the principal or their families that time and that if Kei respected his position on the team then he would find a way to get along with all of his teammates. Takeda informed him the same would also be told to the King when he returned to school.

Kei hadn’t looked at the teacher the entire time, only stared at his hands in his lap, fingers tightly intertwined. He was polite in his responses, but beyond that he gave no indication anything Takeda had said actually registered with him. Kei was so furious about the situation that he only vaguely heard the mention of an absent-from-school King.

Once he was dismissed he returned to his class, ignoring Yamaguchi who pestered him about his conversation with Takeda-sensei. Instead, Kei slipped on his headphones and selected a playlist, turning up the music until the only sounds in his head were the throbbing of heavy base.

Kei considered quitting the team. He hadn’t been sent home like the King the previous day so he’d showed up to practice as normal. The team was hesitant around him, sending him careful glances and bothering him as little as possible. He hadn’t cared or thought much of it, but now that he knew their behavior was a response, not only to his actions the day before, but also because they all most likely talked about it, and Kei was reluctant to show up to practice after school.

Truthfully, Kei was a little embarrassed by his actions. He’d been dealing with the weird changes in his body for two and a half years, plenty of time to learn how to manage them and remain a functional individual. For the most part (with only a few setbacks) he’d been successful. However, since starting high school, he’d faced some major shifts that he was struggling to cope with.

Point of fact, with the exception of his middle school tournament, Kei had never urinated publicly (outside where people might see him). Since starting that school year, it happened on average three times a week in three specific spots around campus. He even had a rotating schedule.

And that was just one of several changes. Another was his inability to control ‘wolfing out’. Kei was pretty sure Yamaguchi had learned of his physical transformation a while ago. However, because he was a good friend, not once had he acknowledged it. Yet, Kei feared now the whole team knew and he wasn’t sure how he felt about that. No one had made mention of it that morning but the thought still sat uncomfortably in his stomach.

The worst of it was his...attraction—fuck if he didn’t hate that word—to the Shrimp. He’d tried to refrain from labeling the peculiar feelings the idiot stirs up in him, but as the month rolled along he’s had more and more difficulty pretending they didn’t exist.

It wasn’t as if he was in love with him or anything. Hell, he wasn’t even sure he liked the Shrimp. If he could rate his dislike for him on a scale of the King to strawberry shortcake, then the shrimp would land somewhere between the King and people who bugged him about how to read his name (those people got on his nerves but they were more bearable than Kageyama).
If Kei absolutely had to identify the emotion, like had to under duress or something, he would probably choose the word possessive as the closest description.

It wasn’t a feeling he could manage at all. He’s tried to explain the feeling away; “the Shrimp is helpless and needs constant support”, “the Shrimp is clueless and needs consistent guidance”, even “the Shrimp is like an adorable puppy you want to protect”, but those statements didn’t encompass the whole of it. Which was why Kei was lost on a stormy sea of incomprehensible emotions.

The King’s presence also didn’t help the situation. The way the King’s scent mingled constantly with the Shrimp’s kept him on edge all of the time. Since Kei had met him, he’d never once encountered the Shrimp’s scent without the cloying smell of the King attached. Kei often wondered if it would still affect him in the same way if he could, for once, experience it without the King polluting it. Was he really that possessive of Hinata or was it just a reaction to the King’s unwanted existence? Kei had the distinct feeling it would not make a difference either way but it still made him feel better to consider outcomes and variables. It made him feel like he had at least a little control over his emotions.

Regardless of it being a self-induced illusion.

Whatever.

Kei sighed, more depressed than pissed now. He just wanted all of the unknowns—the strangeness—to go away. He wanted to be normal, with normal problems. Was that too much too ask?

Kei sat back in his chair at his desk, trying to pay attention to pre-calc. However, his mind kept wandering back to the previous afternoon. Whatever he was feeling over the Shrimp was worse the day before. It wasn’t as if anything had changed really, it was more of a feeling...gut reaction. The moment he’d stepped into the gym he could sense the difference. His eyes had gone straight to the King, watching as he assisted in getting the equipment set up. The way he’d moved, the staggering quickness of his actions or the way he’d mishandled the net, was an indicator something was wrong. Kei had involuntarily sniffed the air (and winced because it was embarrassing) but had immediately noticed something...off. While the usual scent of dead swamps had still clung to the moron, there was also something sharper beneath it. It had made Kei uneasy and kept him on alert as if he expecting the enemy to make a move.

Kei was then dragged away from defensive planning as he was herded with the rest of the team into position for stretches. He sat as far away as possible from the King while keeping an eye out for him, his skin buzzing with apprehension, and feeling like a coiled snake. The King’s gaze, however, was latched onto the Shrimp as if he’d disappear. Kei’s eyes fell to the Shrimp whose eyes were locked on the ground in front of him. The tension in the circle seemed to go mostly unnoticed by the rest of the team, but to Kei the Shrimp was horrible at hiding the fact he knew the King watched him. It was in his body language; his stretches were strained for someone whose flexibility caused Kei to ache in sympathy. It was in his face; how he tried to unsuccessfully keep his expression neutral or his usual happy. It was in his eyes as he struggled to keep from glancing at the King every so often. It made Kei think they had fought recently which wouldn’t be unusual for them.

Why Kei paid so close attention to all of this was a mystery. How the idiot duo acted around each other was none of his business but he couldn’t help but obsess a little over it.

Once stretches were done the captain led them outside to run laps. It wasn’t until the King and his Shrimp had completed a full lap (even with the tension they competed) that Kei grasped an inkling of what was happening.
Kei was jogging silently beside Yamaguchi when the Shrimp blew by them, a blur of red, white, and lime green (his fashion sense was abhorrent). In the wake of the air currents that trailed the Shrimp, Kei understood the King’s fixation. The Shrimp’s scent had not changed only grown stronger, sweeter. If Kei could compare it to wearing perfume, it would be like spritzing yourself with it one day verses bathing in it the next. Except, unlike perfume the smell was not sickening only overwhelmingly pleasant. It was comforting but also wakened within Kei the need to protect.

Something was happening to the Shrimp and he was going to need Kei. Kei just didn’t know why he would be needed.

After that, Kei couldn’t focus. Back inside the gym they began receiving drills. Kei missed more than one ball because he couldn’t stop watching the Shrimp. When he caught the King’s eye, the protective feeling swallowed him whole and he could barely contain the growl that reared up from deep within his chest. He was answered with the same growl but neither could take any further action because the captain intervened, yelling at them to focus.

The rest of practice went the same; Kei watching the Shrimp, challenging and being challenged by the King, and getting yelled at by Ukai or the captain. All that on top of navigating confused and cautious looks from the rest of the team; Kei would normally be put off by all of those instances because they totally messed with his self-control. But he wasn’t, he couldn’t be bothered to care. Once he’d gotten a whiff of the Shrimp, something else started fighting for control and even at that point, Kei knew he was no match for it.

Then when Hinata had been injured he’d reacted without a single thought to how he appeared; threatening. All he’d known then was that the Shrimp was hurt and it was his duty to take care of him. To see to his comfort. But he hadn’t been allowed. He’d been blocked at first by Suga, then by the captain, and finally by the King himself. The...thing... within him had howled in rage at being separated from the Shrimp, at being prevented from fulfilling the almost instinctual need to care for him. Kei had wanted to lash out in anger but stronger emotions held him in check. He was afraid. He was afraid of the team, of the coach, and he was afraid he’d seriously hurt somebody.

On some level he knew the King was struggling with the same desires which only made Kei more anxious and angry. However, if the King had any of the same fears Kei had, then he didn’t show it. Kei was almost happy when the King initiated the confrontation, it gave him an excuse to release all of his pent up aggression.

He had to admit, however, that it was probably a good thing the team stepped in. Unlike the King, once the others pulled them apart, Kei was able to reign in his anger, though he did snap at Ukai. His tongue lashed out at the coach before Kei could control it.

Oddly enough, even then Kei was a little surprised at Ukai’s mostly calm reaction. Yes, he was pissed at Kei’s insult (he’d called him a weak has-been looking to relive his glory days), but he didn’t seem surprised about the fight. In fact, Kei was baffled that he hadn’t stepped in sooner to stop things before they progressed to the point they did and if Kei thought back on the moment, he was about ninety-nine percent sure Ukai had only acted because the captain had first.

Kei wasn’t as surprised that the King had reacted as violently as he did when he’d been yanked off him and restrained on the ground. On a normal day the King was hot-blooded, but Kei had been shocked that the captain struck a first year. Kei felt a little sorry for the captain as he seemed to think his own lack of control was some sort of failing on his part despite the necessity of it.

Anyway, neither he nor the King came out of the incident without their reputations being even more damaged. Kei wouldn’t have cared much except that his behavior would inevitably effect Yamaguchi negatively. People didn’t give his friend enough credit and usually considered him just
some pathetic follower. If they only knew how much Kei depended on his friendship. Also, though Kei would be reluctant to admit this openly, some part of him considered volleyball still worth the effort. Why would he continue playing if he didn’t. His brother’s betrayal years ago may have biased him, but Kei had never completely lost hope. That was another thing to thank Yamaguchi for. He would never just let Kei quit, he knew him too well.

In the end, practice had been cancelled and Kei had retreated home to lick his wounds.

Now he sat in class, still contemplating the pros and cons of continuing on the team.

The bell rang, signaling the end of the school day and Kei realized he’d spent the entirety of the afternoon lost in his own self-pity, shuffling through it all on auto-pilot. That irritated him on top of everything else he was fucking dealing with. Now he’d have to borrow Yamaguchi’s messy notes in order to keep up with his class. Well, at least stay on track, keeping up had never been an issue.

Kei forced himself to participate in the after school cleanup even though he wanted to skip out on it and go home. He had just put away the cloth used to wipe down the chalkboards when Yamaguchi hesitantly toed into the room. He stood by the door, politely greeting acquaintances as he patiently waited on Kei to collect his things.

“They always make you clean the chalkboard,” Yamaguchi chuckled as they stepped into the hallway and started for the gym.

Kei snorted derisively, “Just cause I’m the only one tall enough to reach the whole thing without a chair.”

Yamaguchi grinned, but as Kei side-eyed him he could tell it was more forced than usual.

“What is it?” He sighed, not wanting to deal with anymore questions about Takeda.

Yamaguchi was pointedly avoiding looking at him. He pursed his lips, reluctant to speak what was on his mind before asking, “Are you gonna quit the team?”

Yep, Yamaguchi knew him so well.

Kei was silent for a moment. He knew the answer, he just didn’t want to say it out loud. He didn’t want Yamaguchi to be disappointed in him, despite what people thought, Kei felt proud when Yamaguchi was proud of him.

“No,” he sighed. He never never really seriously considered quitting, he was just mad and feeling petulant.

Yamaguchi turned a wide, bright smile toward him, his freckled face scrunching up in happiness. The sunlight warmed his skin through the windows, giving it a rosey glow. Kei’s chest tightened and he couldn’t help but grin back, barely a tilt of the corner of his mouth. You’d think he’d just given Yamaguchi a lifetime's worth of french fries the way his eyes sparkled and his smile grew wider, showing two rows of bright white teeth.

Kei rolled his eyes and shoved his hand into his best friend’s face to hide his embarrassment, “Stop looking at me like that, idiot.”

Yamaguchi giggled and jerked away. “Sorry Tsukki,” he chirped merrily, his steps bouncier than when he’d entered Kei’s classroom.

Kei walked next to his friend, chatting aimlessly as they wound through the halls and outside,
trekking across campus to the club room building. Kei sniffed the air absentmindedly, searching for familiar scents. There was the stale scent of rotten wood that told him he needed to refresh his scent at the back of the building, and the dissipating scent of sweet grass and gardenias that told him the Shrimp had been by recently. Other than the distinct lack of the King being nearby, everything was as it should be. Kei relaxed somewhat.

They headed up the stairs and into the club room to change into their practice clothes. Several minutes later they exited and tromped down the stairs, stopping outside the gym entrance to change out their shoes. Kei was bent over, picking up his pair when his head snapped up as if someone had called his name.

A slight breeze had picked up carrying on its back the scent of something Kei have never before experienced and something he never wanted to go away.

~O~

Takeda was ecstatic that he made it to practice on time for once, he was still miffed that he missed the events of practice the day before. With the exception of the boys’ confrontation their first week of school, subject interaction had been mostly idle. The latent hostility between Kageyama and Tsukishima hadn’t been enough to keep Takeda from almost complete boredom.

Although he’d never admit it, the one perk he’d found he actually liked about his assignment was volleyball. Not the sport itself, Takeda couldn’t care less about it seeing as though he’s never been athletic himself. However, he couldn’t fault the group of boys for their tenacity to improve and win. While the overall sport may lack much attraction in Takeda’s mind, observing the dynamics of the players’ skills sets and how they either bolster the team or hinder their progress has been nothing short of fascinating.

Leave it to a bunch of testosterone fueled, idiot teenagers to make Takeda’s time as a crappy high school teacher less insufferable.

Takeda stood on the sidelines as he observed the boy’s trickling in, pulling out equipment, and preparing the large hall for practice. They were noisy, smart mouthed, and headstrong to a fault. However, they were also driven, supportive, and unfortunately, endearing.

“Hiya Take-chan!” Tanaka bellowed, bright and cheerful, as he passed by Takeda at a full run toward the equipment room, screaming at Noya. Takeda allowed himself to grin as he watched an animated exchange between the two about their manager, catching only snippets of their conversation.

“Get to work! Daichi shouted at them, and Takeda’s eyes snapped to the captain who rubbed his temples as if caring for the rowdy group of teenagers was the worst thing possible. Takeda shook his head, chuckling at their antics despite himself.

Endearing.

Takeda, forced to work in a field so far below his qualifications and surrounded by undisciplined brats, had expected to hate every single moment of his time at the high school. Yet, for all his complaints, it was hard to maintain his disappointment as he’s watched twelve teenage boys begin to
turn the wheels of change, ever so slowly chipping away at their imperfections with one goal in mind. Even Kageyama and Tsukishima, perpetual outcasts as they were, couldn’t struggle against the tide that drug them along.

Takeda won’t claim to be clairvoyant (he never believed such things), and even though it’s been only a month since school started, he would tell anyone who asked that the ragtag team he’d been put in charge of were gonna shake the world. Well, at least their own little piece of it.

He knew he’d put up a front for Ukai; that he’d slipped on the mask of the detached observer. He’d had to. It was one thing to intuit his own struggle to remain objective. It was a completely different matter to admit it to his...partner, for lack of a better term. The worst thing a scientist could do was to get too attached to his subjects. Not just because it made letting go harder, but emotion clouded judgement and could affect results. The last thing Takeda wanted was to get pulled out of the field, so by reminding Ukai to keep it together, Takeda was also indirectly reminding himself.

Ukai. There was a different sort of problem—

“Hey Sensei.”

Speak of the devil.

Ukai greeted Takeda, stepping up next to him, his expression almost bored even though his eyes shined with unrestrained merriment. Takeda may have criticized him for taking his job as coach a little too seriously but it was obvious, no matter how Ukai hid it, he was absolutely thrilled to be there. Their first practice match with Nekoma was quickly approaching, in less than two weeks to be exact, and Ukai was a man with a mission. He was determined to stomp Nekoma into the ground as tribute to his ailing grandfather and the practice match would be how they determined what they needed to work on the most—besides receives.

“Good afternoon, Ukai-san,” Takeda returned the greeting with a nod and a small grin. As Ukai turned his attention to the boys, yelling at them to quit goofing off and finish setting up, Takeda tried to subtly check him—observe him.

Ukai had a good ten or so centimeters on Takeda, give or take. He was broad but not overly muscular, more lean than anything. Despite the fact he exhaled more toxins than a chemical plant thanks to the absurd amount of cigarettes he smoked daily, Takeda could still tell Ukai was active. He filled out the track suits he wore to practice (or any time Takeda had ever seen him) comfy and loose but unable to completely hide his brawny frame.

Ukai caught Takeda ogling—watching—him, eyes the color of spring acorns that fell around Takeda’s childhood home, locking on to him with a quirk of sharply angled eyebrows. Caught in the act, Takeda quickly recovered, plastering on one of his most cheerful, friendly grins and turned his attention to the boys littered around the gym setting things up and preparing to stretch. He hoped by playing the dorky teacher, Ukai wouldn’t notice the blush that was forming along tops of his cheeks and the bridge of his nose.

Like Takeda said, a different sort of problem.

But ultimately one he could contemplate later as Tsukishima entered through the doors; tall, intelligent, and usually indifferent, but at that moment wholly fixated on a certain ginger Omega. It was impossible to miss the way those weird gold eyes targeted the small boy, his expression confused and at the same time captivated. Tsukishima shook his head once, as if trying to clear it of some thought or another, but was again bewitched by Hinata, even as he navigated his way across the gym to set aside his water bottle and towel before joining his teammates.
Takeda kept his eyes on the Alpha as Ukai gathered everyone and had Daichi lead them all in their stretches. As one they echoed the count, a melody of varying tones and effort resonating around the large room. All except Tsukishima who Takeda could tell was only mouthing the count while he stared at Hinata with the intensity of a lion looking at a lamb. If Hinata noticed, he was doing a great job of ignoring it as he worked his muscles with a great amount of energy.

Tsukishima’s friend...Yamaguchi, seemed to notice, however, as he elbowed the Alpha a few times attempting to get him to focus. Tsukishima, barely paying attention to Yamaguchi, absentmindedly nodded and continued to watch the Omega with rapt attention.

That, Takeda found utterly fascinating. On any given day, it would be a small miracle if Tsukishima acknowledged a person’s existence. With the exception of his freckled friend, it was if all of humanity merely occupied space not unlike dust beneath your couch—something you knew was there but just took too much effort to remove. That wasn’t to say he was impolite or anything. It was only that his courtesy was so obviously an obligation rather than genuine friendliness. If you happened to garner the Alpha’s attention, it was to most often to mock you or, when he was particularly pissy, to verbally crush your soul.

Whoever said words could never hurt had never had the displeasure of meeting Tsukishima Kei.

And it appeared that since starting high school, apart from heckling Kageyama, Tsukishima’s favorite activity was to terrorize Hinata. You might think he hated the poor boy as much as he did other Alpha, however, Takeda had a sneaking suspicion his feelings ran deeper than that, even if he didn’t know it himself. After all, Tsukishima was genetically predispositioned to gravitate toward the Omega. His Alpha blood demanded it.

Takeda broke his attention away from Tsukishima in order to address Ukai. He turned his back and lowered his voice, leaning in to the coach.

“Do you plan to have them run laps, Ukai-san?”

Ukai leaned in to hear him better, then leaned back to look him in the eye, “Yeah, why?”

Takeda didn’t want to come right out and admit his reasons—that he wanted to continue to observe the Alpha without interruption—knowing that saying so out loud could alert Hinata and Tsukishima to his real intentions.

“I was only thinking you might have them run indoors today.” Takeda tried his best to non-verbally convey the subtext of his words, but by the look in Ukai’s eyes he’d obviously missed the mark.

“Yes, Sensei, but it’s an awfully nice day out and they’d probably be more comfortable jogging outdoors.” Ukai looked so confused it was irritatingly adorable.

Takeda rolled his eyes and tried again, “That is true, however, it might be good to run them inside so that we can continue to watch them,” he stressed a few key words and stared with intent at Ukai. For a moment, the coach just stared back, his brow wrinkled in charming perplexity. Then his expression cleared and he seemed to understand. Ukai nodded and turned back to the boys who were finishing up with their exercises. He blew his whistle, catching their attention.

“Alright you goons, laps! Indoors!”

His command was followed up with no shortage of grumbling and whining, mostly from Noya, Tanaka, and Hinata who was bouncing on his toes, his small body nearly vibrating with the effort to remain calm. Takeda watched him with interest. The Omega was overflowing with pep that
afternoon, everyone noticed but ignored it as one of his many annoying habits. However, Takeda felt himself the only one to notice how twitchy he was underneath it. While Hinata plastered on his usual bright smile, Takeda saw the strain behind it, as if Hinata had something else on his mind that kept trying to pull him away from the present activity. He would talk a mile a minute only to go oddly quiet before bursting like a damn, words tumbling out faster than he thought of them. Takeda wasn’t close enough to see if he had other, more inconspicuous symptoms and every time Hinata passed him in a lap, all he saw was a flash of red.

Takeda returned to observing Tsukishima who was trying to do all he could to keep the Omega in his sights. At one point, while Tsukishima was passing on the far side of the gym, Takeda watched as Hinata out paced each teammate, yet again. Tsukishima’s impassive expression momentarily contorted in rapture before he quickly recovered, his brow dipping angrily.

Takeda was absolutely transfixed. He could only guess their behavior had something to do with their mating instincts. According to the charts, neither boy was due to enter rut/heat; Hinata, specifically, still had at least a week to go. Yet, as of the previous day, Tsukishima was grouchier than usual. Takeda had personally observed his change in attitude earlier in the day having called him aside during the lunch hour. Tsukishima was never one to take criticism lightly but the level of indignation that rolled off of him then had struck Takeda as a little dramatic. Yes, he was being disciplined for his aggressive behavior from the day before. However, it wasn’t as if he was being dismissed from the team permanently. Given the circumstances, you would think probation versus some of the more serious consequences he could have faced would make him a bit more humble. Instead, he’d seemed offended, barely replying to Takeda and not looking at him once during their talk. Takeda tried not to take it personally, but it still left a bitter taste in his mouth to be so easily dismissed by a fifteen year old.

However, beyond his personal opinions of the matter, Takeda could recognize the crack in Tsukishima’s usually reserved demeanor. Even though he’d never seen it, Takeda would honestly hate to experience first hand a Tsukishima during his full rut.

Takeda was pulled from his thoughts as the boys completed their last lap and dispersed to towel off and grab a drink of water.

“Five minutes,” Ukai yelled beside Takeda, “Then receiving practice.”

This would have normally been the part where Hinata grumbled about wanting to practice spikes, but the small Omega was weirdly quiet as he wandered off by himself. Takeda watched as he shook himself, flexing his fingers and rolling his neck as he slowly shuffled in small circles. Takeda caught his confused and nervous expression when his path brought him round to face the group.

“Hey, Hinata! You missing Kageyama that bad?” Tanaka hollered at him, his voice a teasing lilt that had a few of the players chuckle lightly and others whistle suggestively.

Hinata barely glanced at any of them, a flicker of a nervous smile flashing across his face as he focused on continuing his trek to nowhere.

Takeda looked at Tsukishima who was frozen next to Yamaguchi, watching Hinata with obsessive focus. Yamaguchi kept trying to engage Tsukishima, even going so far as waving his hand before his friend’s face, but the action didn’t even cause Tsukishima to flinch. Whatever was happening to Tsukishima took his complete attention. His face, while a mixed bag of emotion earlier, was now blank, the gold in his eyes disappearing behind dilated pupils. The change in affect was almost unnerving.

It seemed as though the rest of the team was catching on that something was wrong as the
atmosphere inside the gym was quickly gaining tension. The boys were obviously preparing for another fall out like the day before.

Takeda glanced at Ukai. The coach stood by, his posture relaxed and his face suggesting boredom, but Takeda could feel the anticipation radiating off of him, and he recognized the way he subtly moved his feet as if preparing to sprint across the gym the second things fell apart. Takeda swallowed nervously, his own senses heightened by the surge of adrenaline in his bloodstream.

“Hey Hinata, everything alright? You feeling okay?” Suga’s soothing voice rolled over the gym.

Takeda turned his attention back to the developing situation before him. His eyes fell on Suga who’d begun making his way to his distressed teammate. Not far from them, Daichi had stepped up to block Tsukishima’s path but was forced back by the steely, blown gaze of an Alpha male seeking a mate. The captain, caught off guard by that creepy expression, quickly backed down. He appeared pulled between his need to protect his kohai and self-preservation. His head kept whipping between Tsukishima, Hinata, and Suga who was totally focused on the Omega.

“Hinata?” Suga questioned tentatively, one hand outstretched.

Hinata whipped around to look at him, his eyes wide and wild with confusion and fear.

“Suga-san!” He squeaked, then tried to cover up his anxiety with a brave smile. “I’m okay! Just feeling a little-“

He didn’t get to finish as Tsukishima finally confronted him. Takeda held his breath, trembling in anticipation of what would happen next.

Hinata was obviously on the verge of his heat and Tsukishima was feeling the effects of it. This was the most monumental moment of Takeda’s career so far since he’d been introduced to the supposed myth of the Beta gene. Director Kida was going to flip when he read Takeda’s report later.

Suga backed off, the air between the Alpha and Omega filled with a friction his expression said he didn’t understand. Time seemed to stand still within the gym as everyone watched the events unfold with bated breath.

Hinata went rigid beneath Tsukishima’s fervent stare, like a small deer in the headlights of a Mac truck, unable look away and avoid impending destruction.

“Why do you smell like that?” In the quiet of the gym, Tsukishima’s low voice carried as if he had been talking into a microphone.

“Ha-hah, Stingyshima?!” Hinata attempted to sound offended but it came out more shrill and scared than anything. His fingers busied themselves fidgeting with the hem of his t-shirt and his face filled with color, turning redder than lobster in a pot of boiling water.

Tsukishima tilted his head. Takeda couldn’t see his face, his back was to both of them but Hinata’s grew impossibly wider and Takeda wondered what face the Alpha was making.

“Why do you smell like that?” Tsukishima asked again, this time reaching out one long fingered hand. Hinata went as still as the dead as the Alpha gripped the Omega’s chin in his fingers, thumb tracing the swell of Hinata’s bottom lip.

“You smell…” Tsukishima breathed deeply, his shoulder rising with the action, “so good, Hinata.”

The Omega whimpered, visibly shaking even as he stepped closer to the Alpha. A second later he
closed his eyes and relaxed into the oddly gentle caress as Tsukishima continued to trace his lips with his thumb. He opened his eyes, and Takeda could tell they had dilated too, the umber of his irises disappearing behind the black of his pupils.

“Tsukishima,” he whispered, his voice needy, calling to the Alpha before him and his eyes begging.

“Smells so…” Tsukishima answered.

“Hey! Dipshits! Could we get on with practice?!” Ukai’s voice resounded within the gym, bouncing off the walls and startling everyone, even causing a few of the players to shout in surprise. Takeda would admit that he’d nearly jumped out of his skin, gripping his shirt over his heart as it increased in speed to the point Takeda worried he’d suffer arrhythmia from that point on.

However, the sudden yelling not only scared the shit out of everyone, it seemed to break the spell over Tsukishima and Hinata. The Omega jumped back, ripping himself from Tsukishima’s grasp, fear and shame abundant in his expression. Tsukishima clutched his head as if it hurt, his own expression utter confusion.

“Holy fuck, what the hell just happened!” Tanaka hollered, all eyes flicking between him, Hinata, and Tsukishima.

“I-I…” Hinata started, he looked like a wild animal trapped among predators. He wasn’t exactly far off.

“Hinata,” Daichi begun but had little time to finish before Hinata was moving, gathering his things and running for the door at full speed. Quiet settled over gym once again as eleven pairs of eyes stared at the entrance Hinata disappeared out of.

“What the hell is happening to me?!”

Those eleven pairs of eyes fell on Tsukishima who hid his face in both his hands. He stood where Hinata left him, shaking. Yamaguchi hesitantly approached him, gently placing a hand on his shoulder.

“Tsukki,” he started, his voice comforting.

“DON’T TOUCH ME!” Tsukishima bellowed, his hands flying out to slap away the hand of his very startled friend. A second later he was collecting his own things and stalking away.

Nobody moved for a moment as shock over that afternoon’s events settled over the group. Everyone stared at the doors again, except for Yamaguchi who was staring at the floor, wringing his hands and blinking rapidly. He cleared his throat, gaining everyone’s attention as the eyes of his teammates pinned him to the spot.

Yamaguchi sniffed and took a deep, shuddering breath before opening his mouth.

"P-Please don’t k-kick him off the t-team,” he stuttered, his voice trembling, “th-this is normal f-for him. It happens a-about once a month or so…” he trailed off, ducking his head as a flush spread across his cheeks.

Noya snorted, “Normal.”

Ukai didn’t give anyone else a chance to comment. He blew his whistle, making a few of the boys jump again.
“Daichi, receive practice. Takeda and I will deal with this.”

The captain nodded reluctantly, his mouth a tight line, but he complied regardless. He clapped his hands, yelling at his team to get moving. They did so, muttering quietly amongst themselves about what they just saw.

Takeda, finally gathering himself, grabbed Ukai by his muscular bicep and lead him through the gym doors.

“We will return shortly,” Takeda called over his shoulder, pushing a complaining Ukai out the door. Just as they passed beneath the windows, Takeda heard one of the boys comment, “Does anyone else need a shower after that?” Awkward laughter spilled into the open and followed Takeda and Ukai.

Takeda dragged him several yards from the gym before allowing them to stop. He looked around for anyone within earshot as Ukai slipped out a cigarette and lit it, completely uncaring he was still on school grounds and out in the open. Takeda felt he deserved it after what just happened. Still, Takeda was a little disappointed Ukai had interrupted the scene and said as much once he decided they were alone.

“Ukai, why did you intervene?!” Takeda tried to keep his tone calm and nonjudgmental.

Ukai snorted and took a drag of the cigarette, the end burning bright as oxygen was pulled through it, fueling the fire within. He exhaled, the stream of grey smoke catching on the breeze to be carried away. Ukai gazed at Takeda, his eyes taking on a caramel color in the sunlight.

“Was I supposed to let them continue, Sensei?”

Takeda paused, the statement not fully processing, still caught up in scientist mode.

Ukai sighed and shook his head, one hand resting on his hip as the other swiped down his face in frustrated fashion, “Sensei, I don’t know about you but as far as I know, their anatomy would suggest a lot gay sex would be happening. I’m am fairly certain that would have been highly inappropriate as a practice strategy. Also, does your research really require you to observe sex between minors or are you just that pervy?”

Takeda at first stared at Ukai in horror, then in righteous indignation, “I would never…” he started and paused, thinking.

Ukai’s expression went from disdainful to disgust, “You’re not seriously considering-“

“NO!” Takeda insisted, glaring at Ukai, offended he would suggest such a repugnant thing. “It’s just, do you really think Tsukishima would have taken it that far? In the middle of practice?!”

Ukai considered his question a moment before answering, taking another drag of his cigarette, “Yeah. I don’t know if you saw his face, but from where I stood I could. He had the same look I’d give someone I wanted fuck into oblivion.”

Takeda stared at Ukai, his mouth hanging open. He had said it with such...thoughtlessness, Takeda
wondered if Ukai had even heard himself. Takeda couldn’t stop himself from bursting into uncontrolled laughter, trying to bury the sounds behind one hand while his other wrapped around his stomach. His body shook with the force of it all, nearly doubling him over.

“What?” Ukai growled at him, confused about what had been so funny.

“What?” Takeda answered, wiping his eyes and gasping for air as he tried to still the giggles that kept bubbling forth, “Nothing, Ukai. Sometimes you’re just so…” He fell into giggling again.

“So what?!” Ukai demanded looking mildly afraid of what Takeda was going to say.

Takeda took a deep breath and hummed, looking at Ukai with fondness, “So cute.”

Ukai’s eyes widened exponentially, his face flushing in embarrassment, “What the hell does that mean?!”

Takeda smiled at him, wide and genuine.

Ukai was definitely a different sort of problem for Takeda, and on some level, Takeda could empathize with Tsukishima.

Chapter End Notes

A tiny bit of development before we stall again. Sorry but after the next chapter, it slows back down. This is your warning.

Next:

Chapter 10: When I Get That Feeling
Chapter 10: When I Get That Feeling

First Year, High School, Spring

Kei stepped into the gym, his eyes immediately searching out the Shrimp. The breeze that had kicked up while he’d been switching out his shoes carried a hint of something sweeter than anything he’d ever breathed before. It wasn’t the kind of sweet that was almost too rich for the senses, no it was a new experience altogether. Kei couldn’t categorize the new aroma, he was pretty sure it was something that didn’t exist on the planet, or at least in Japan, until now.

It was a light scent, barely there, but definitely distinct and it clouded his mind every time he caught a whiff of it. Also, it was coming straight off the Shrimp.

Kei shook his head, trying to clear the fuzziness that overwhelmed his mind, but it did little good because the scent lingered and as soon as he stilled the effects of it were back with gusto. For every minute Kei passed in the gym, his mind sunk deeper into the haze created by it.

Kei dropped his water bottle and towel off at one of the benches along one side of the gym, keeping Hinata in his periphery at all times. Besides the new aroma wafting from him, something seemed...off. Kei couldn’t put a finger on it, but he could sense it, see it. The Shrimp was nervous. It wasn’t a fearful nervous, at least that’s how Kei saw it. It was more...physical than emotional. Beneath his natural scent and the new fragrance, he smelled the heat of the Shrimp’s body temperature rising and noticed the subtle way the Shrimp trembled every now and then. Hinata tried to cover it up with smiles and shared jokes among the team but Kei saw all of the minute discrepancies in his façade.

As Kei and the team settled into their pre-practice workout, he couldn’t take his eyes off the Shrimp. He knew he was being obvious about his attentions, he could tell by the Shrimp’s stiff movements that he felt Kei watching him. Kei could not stop, however. Every movement, every breath held him captive as Hinata’s body was obviously undergoing some new change. Well, it was obvious to Kei...
since he appeared to be the only one who noticed. At one point, something sharp prodded Kei’s side and a voice begged him to focus. He nodded, barely giving the thing a passing thought consumed as he was with Hinata’s every...everything.

A whistle blew, dragging Kei from the fog. Ukai’s raspy, exasperated voice commanded them to take laps around the gym and Kei followed orders still slightly dazed and confused about the Shrimp. Kei had, over the last month, accustomed himself to the Shrimp’s different eccentricities, be it overt or not. It was an ability he did not ask for and gained without his permission. Regardless, Kei had done his best to write it off as one of his eccentricities and put it mostly out of his mind. Yet, between the events of the day before and the current, he’d been unable to force the Shrimp completely from his thoughts. If he was truthful with himself, he’d admit that some part of him had been eagerly anticipating their interactions, such as they were, since Hinata was forced to leave practice the previous day.

Still, he couldn’t understand why he was so preoccupied by the normally annoying idiot. It’s not like he didn’t smell good every other day. But, that wasn’t the truth, was it? The fact was, on this day in particular, Hinata smelled... exquisite ...

And everytime he passed Kei in a lap, Kei couldn’t help closing his eyes and breathing deep. He couldn’t help the want that had begun to build way down in his gut, leaving him flustered and irritated and perplexed.

The team finished their laps, one by one slowing to cool down as they ambled over to water bottles and towels. Kei followed suit, still keeping an eye on the Shrimp who wandered off to a secluded corner, more nervous than necessary given the environment. Tanaka yelled out some teasing remark that Kei didn’t catch or care about.

With nothing to distract Kei, he spiraled, even as Yamaguchi tried to gain his attention. With every movement, Hinata stirred the air in the gym, the scent gliding on the currents, a little stronger. Something in Kei woke up then, his mind succumbing to instincts as he reacted without thought. He took a step toward Hinata, the scent a siren song calling him, his blood running hot in his veins.

Suga was closer and headed for Hinata at the same time, his voice laced with worry as he sought out Hinata’s comfort. Hinata answered, attempting to alleviate the vice’s fears, but his voice wavered and to Kei’s ears there was a barely perceptible whine hanging on the words that stirred Kei to move. Kei took more steps in Hinata’s direction, anger rising as another male dared to approach. Halfway there he was blocked by the captain and he stared him down, a low growl emanating from his chest, warning the male to back off. The inferior male did as told, taking a step back, the light sour tint to his usually earthy aroma a telling sign that he was submissive.

Kei vaguely registered any of it; the silence of the gym and the fear in the eyes of the captain and vice (who’d retreated as well), as he continued toward Hinata, finally stopping before him. A moment passed, neither of them saying anything as Hinata fidgeted in nervousness.

“Why do you smell like that?” It was the one question that had been plaguing Kei since it first hit him.

*Why does he smell so good...*

“Ha-hah, Stingyshima?!” Hinata yelled. His voice cracked and his face suggested fear but turned red in embarrassment.

*So good...*
“Why do you smell like that?” Kei tilted his head and murmured, but the question wasn’t really directed at Hinata. Kei’s eyes traveled up and down Hinata’s smaller, but lean, body before resting, half lidded, on his pink lips. He licked his own, his mouth dry all of a sudden. He had a need to touch Hinata, to see for himself, if his lips were as soft as they looked. Kei raised a hand to gently grip Hinata’s chin, tracing the swell of his bottom lip with his thumb. He sighed, the feel of the plump flesh sending sparks through his fingers and arm and racing down his spine.

Want...

“You smell...so good, Hinata,” his eyes lifted to see wide brown ones frozen on his face. Hinata trembled beneath his hand, the intoxicating, scent pouring off of him and growing stronger. Hinata, whimpered and took a faltering step forward, closing the gap between them just a little more. Kei could tell he was nervous and that did more things to him. He smiled at Hinata, pheromones pouring off of him to comfort...

He continued to caress Hinata’s lips.

Want...

Hinata’s eyes closed as he breathed in and Kei’s blood sang in satisfaction when his eyes opened again, pupils blown, and whispered his name, voice saturated with need.

...take

Kei’s heart was beating rapidly, increasing his breaths to quiet panting. Fire coursed through him, the desire building within him rising fast...

Take...

...want...

“Smells good...”

.....take...want...

...MINE...

“Hey! Dipshits! Could we get on with practice?!”

The scent was gone suddenly, like smoke through a filter. The fog began to clear in Kei’s head and he shook it, his senses reeling as if he’d just climbed off of one of those spinny rides at the amusement park. In the background he could hear voices speaking, including the Shrimp, but his blood was pounding in his ears, and not from arousal. Kei held his head, shaking it some more and trying to clear the last of the fog. The arousal that had popped up in his belly, hardening him, had disappeared. Ukai’s voice had been like a bucket of cold water, dousing any desire Kei had felt and leaving in its shadow confusion and fear.

“What the hell is happening to me?!” He cried out in frustration, grinding the heel of his palms into his eyes, trying to block out the images and feelings of the last few minutes. His desire had been at a level he’d never experienced before. It wasn’t like all the other times, when he’d laid in his bed, month after month, enduring the lust that ravished him. No, this was calm but no less intense, focused and heated. He’d stared at the Shrimp but wasn’t seeing the annoying teammate. He’d only seen his...his...

Kei had wanted to bury himself in Hinata until he cried out, begging to be possessed. The thought
had *excited* Kei, it still did, but it also terrified him.

Suddenly there was a hand on his shoulder and Kei snapped.

“DON’T TOUCH ME!” He yelled, slapping the hand away as he rounded on the person, finding a very scared and very hurt Yamaguchi. It took Kei less than a minute to bolt after that, gathering his things, his face heated in anger and shame. He left without another word to the team, the coach, or Takeda.

Kei ascended the club room steps three at a time, his long legs easily covering the gap. He threw open the door, darting to his bag and shoving everything willy nilly inside, not even bothering to zip it as he slung the strap over his shoulder and exited the premises as fast as his legs could carry him. Kei ran the distance between the school and his house in record time. He burst through his door as soon as he unlocked it, thankful his parents were still working and the house empty. He shoved off his shoes, nearly tripping himself as he did, leaving what things he carried at the entrance. As soon as he was inside his room, he slammed the door shut and locked it behind him, sliding down to the floor to sit with his face in his hands while he tried to catch his breath.

He could still feel the need to take Hinata, to make him his own. His blood called for it, crying out in distress as he trembled, denying himself his desire. The feeling was horrifying in so many ways. For one, Kei had never been interested in anyone before, sexually or emotionally. It wasn’t that he had never been attracted to anyone, it was only that dating and sex wasn’t something he wanted *now*. Kei had other aspirations, goals, and he didn’t have room for that kind of thing in his life. When he did think about it, a rare occurrence, it was always with traditional ideas- a bride in a white dress. Truthfully, Kei had often wished Yamaguchi was a girl, if only because being with him would be safe. Yamaguchi knew him, all his peculiarities, and accepted him- even the ones they never talked about.

Kei was sweating, his heart pounding, and there was the familiar pull behind his belly button. The same sensation he’d grown used to, month to month, over the last few years told him the lust was building. Within hours he’d lose himself to his hormonal needs, and that was odd because it had come early. Kei could nearly set the clock by how consistent the lust came.

*What was different this time…?*

*Was it him...was it...Hina...*

Yes, it had to be because the very thought of that moron made Kei’s cock stiffen even as his stomach turned.

Kei pushed himself off the floor, shoving thoughts of Hinata as far to the back of his mind as possible. He slowly stripped his clothes off, tossing them into a corner. He wouldn’t need them for a few days anyway. He made his way to the bathroom, preparing to shower before he succumbed to his sexual urges. Even though he’d roll around in his own mess for the next few days, he’d prefer to at least start clean.

Kei started the shower, adjusting the temperature, before climbing under the steaming water. He adjusted the shower head so he could partially submerge himself, being the tallest in his family having its drawbacks. Streams of hot water ran down his face, his neck, his shoulders and chest, all the long way down to collect at his feet before rolling down the drain. Kei tried to focus on that, on the heat and the slick slide of water, but his traitorous mind fought against him, images of Hinata flashing across his vision.
Kei panted as he grew even harder, breathing the hot steam making him increasingly lightheaded. In his mind’s eye he saw Hinata’s brown eyes blown in arousal, heavy lidded and glassy. As if it was happening then instead of earlier in the gym, he heard him whisper his name, those pink lips wrapping around the syllables and longing hanging on the sounds like warm honey. Kei bit his lip and groaned, leaning against the tile, his fingers curling into fists as he desperately denied himself what he wanted most.

He forced himself to breathe slow, to think of anything else- anyone else- but his renegade body and mind resisted him. He didn’t, couldn’t, want Hinata. It was crazy, absurd, humiliating…

He tried to think of Kiyoko, she was stunning and reserved. If Kei could choose a girl, she would be at the top of his list. Instead he growled, the thought of touching her in any way remotely like he wanted to touch Hinata was completely unsexy. He forced himself to think of Yamaguchi, if he was going to jack off to a boy, then it would be one of his choosing. However, the thoughts made him angry, appalled even. Kei was pretty sure his want of Hinata had little to do with his gender. It was just him, him and that amazing smell. Kei wanted be as near as possible to breath it in, to be wholly enveloped by it. He wanted lap it up and devour it.

He groaned again, his legs shaking. His dick weighed heavy between his legs, leaking even as he refused to touch it.

But he wanted to…

He wanted…

What would it really hurt? No one was there but him and Hinata would never know. So he wanted to fuck him. Kei had never needed stimulation to get off, he’d always been so sensitive during the lust that it never took much. Yet, this time would be different, he had a feeling. Now that he’d been made conscious of that new aroma, like a drug, Kei would be chasing the high he’d experienced forever. His lust would never be satisfied with simple masturbation. He wanted that scent and Hinata was its source.

So Kei let himself wonder and wander the fantasies of his imagination. His mind was immediately filled with images of Hinata, bare and stretched out on his hands and knees, his perky ass raised, presented to Kei wet and ready. Just that thought alone had Kei instantly gripping his lonely cock in hand.

“Ah...hahahaah…” he breathed against the tile, unable to control his voice with how sensitive he felt. He didn’t waste any time, too impatient after neglecting himself for so long. Kei stroked himself hard and fast, pretending his hand was Hinata’s asshole tight around his cock. With his thumb and forefinger, he created a narrow hole, fucking into it as the underside of his shaft rubbed against his calloused palm.

“Fuckgodfuck…” he cursed, buttcheeks clenching and thigh muscles flexing, “damnshit...fuckfuckfuck…”

At that moment in time, despite every negative thing he’d ever thought or said about Hinata, Kei wanted him there with him. He’d take it all back just to pin him to the wall of his shower and drive his dick deep into his ass until Hinata begged for his cum.

Cum…

I want to cum...in…
The thought of shooting his load, filling Hinata so full, sent Kei spiraling over the edge.

“God DAMMIT!” He painted the tile in thick ropes of pearly white fluid as he came so hard his senses seemed to overload, briefly shutting down. The hollow sound of water in a tile bathroom disappeared beneath the sound of ringing in his ears. The feel of the water on his skin, the cool press of tile beneath his feet, the smell of various shampoos and soaps, faded behind the onslaught on his pleasure as he pumped himself through the remnants of his orgasm.

Eventually, Kei remembered where he was at. He sighed against the warm green tiles, his chest and shoulders heaving with each deep breath he took. His legs gave out and he sank to the floor, tepid water pouring down his back. He groaned, one large hand dragging down his face. 

So, yup, that just happened.

~O~

Shōyō sat in the lobby of the hospital, one leg bouncing rapidly and one thumb nail shoved into his mouth as he bit practically into the quick. The fingers of his other hand drummed repeatedly against the hard plastic of the armrest of the uncomfortable chair he waited in. The lobby was brightly lit and quiet with few people, most of whom were more focused on the news that played on the large flat screen hanging on the wall. The receptionist sat behind her station, typing away at whatever it was hospital receptionists typed away at while occasionally answering phone calls.

Shōyō stood up and stomped up to the receptionist desk, placing his hands on the ugly Formica countertop, his fingers taking up their incessant beat once again. The lady at the desk, a small, curt woman with sharp features and a sharper gaze, glanced up at his drumming fingers before meeting his eye with a raised, perfectly sculpted eyebrow. Hinata blushed, his fingers stuttering to a stop before he curled them into a fist and brought them down to his side.

“Hinata-san, as I told you the last three times you asked, the nurse on duty has contacted Dr. Uemura. When he arrives, they will either let me know or retrieve you themselves. Until then, have a seat and be patient.”

Shōyō wanted to snort, both from anxiety and humor. Anyone who knew him would tell you he wasn’t a patient person. Especially given the circumstance.

“Please,” he begged, “Please just try again. I can’t wait, this is serious. An emergency!”

The receptionist stared at him with a flat expression, “If it was an emergency, then perhaps you should have gone to the E.R.” Her tone held no pity for his plight and if Shōyō hadn’t been raised better, he might have slapped her emotionless face. Instead, he lowered his head in defeat and returned to his chair to wait, his leg once again taking up its rapid bounce while he drummed fingers again on the arm rest. This time, however, he switched so he could chew the thumb on the opposite hand. If he continued biting at the other, he’d make himself bleed.

Shōyō groaned and sunk into his seat a little farther, glancing back at the receptionist who sent him a disapproving look before turning back to her work. Shōyō wanted to cry. He glared at the receptionist and thought that there were moments he wished he was more like Tsukishima. That light pole would know how to deal with stubborn, rude hospital workers.
And as if he wasn’t uncomfortable enough, the thought of that jerk sent heat cascading over Shōyō like thick molasses. He bit down on his thumb hard to stave off the moan that fought to break free. Between his legs, Shōyō started to harden, again, and he twisted his body in order to hide the slight tenting in his loose shorts as he desperately attempted to fight off his impending erection. He’d been wrestling with the onslaught of arousal since his encounter with Stingyshima in the gym nearly an hour beforehand.

It’s funny how a thing can be expected and unexpected all at once. Shōyō knew the time for the heat was quickly approaching, he just hadn’t been as ready as he thought he would be. He had assumed it would happen as it did before, the sudden hot flash that was followed by all the other nasty symptoms. This had been different, however. And sooner than he’d hoped.

He supposed he should have figured it out the day before when all that stuff went down with Kageyama and Tsukishima. He hadn’t been around for the actual fight but he hadn’t been surprised to hear it. The whole practice had been a mess, and even if Shōyō could be oblivious to most situations, the atmosphere between the three of them was hard to ignore. Both Kageyama and Tsukishima had been putting out stronger scents that were overwhelming to Shōyō. Their natural odors were still there but underlying them was a slight musky aroma that had Shōyō’s head spinning. It was why he screwed up his block so bad and took Tanaka’s spike straight to his face.

It wasn’t as if that new scent was unpleasant, the opposite was true, in fact. Both guys smelled amazing and Shōyō just kept getting lost in it; it made him feel antsy. After he left the gym with Suga-senpai, the effects started wearing off, and by evening time Shōyō felt like he imagined the oddly, pleasing smells.

However, he couldn’t get Kageyama or Tsukishima out of his head. Not that thinking of them was an uncommon occurrence, but his thoughts seemed more obsessive than normal. Even so, he was able to put the uneasy feeling mostly behind him for the evening. He wasn’t allowed to go to school the following morning because his mother wanted to make sure he wouldn’t suffer any ill side effects despite the school nurse’s assurances he should be fine and dandy by the following day.

The next morning the restlessness was back. First of all, he woke up with major morning wood and very dirty underwear. Of course being a teenage boy, this was a normal factor in Shōyō’s life and not one he gave too much thought about except to be mildly disgusted. Still, he took care of the problem (ignoring the fact his imagination kept repeatedly producing visions of blonde hair or blue eyes). The whole time he sorta wished he could be surrounded by that wonderful musky smell he noticed the day before.

Unfortunately, the restlessness did not disappear after he...finished. It didn’t get worse but it didn’t get any better. Shōyō chalked it up to having missed practice twice and having a lot of pent up energy. That’s why he was so glad when his mother, sick of his nervous fidgeting and constant whining, sent him off to school with the promise to kill him if he got hurt again.

Fast forward to afternoon practice that day and Shōyō was nearly crawling out of his skin, the restlessness steadily increasing until Tsukishima walked through the door. Then a whole new sensation overtook him. The musky scent was back and it did things to him. Shōyō couldn’t focus at all. He didn’t feel antsy anymore so much as...needy. Tsukishima hyper focused on him the moment he stepped into the gym, and Shōyō loved it; he absolutely loved the attention and he didn’t know why. All he understood about how he felt was that he would do anything to keep Tsukishima’s attention, which he felt very weird about. By the time they sat down for stretches, Shōyō was doing his best to ignore Tsukishima because regardless of his odd...attraction, Shōyō just wanted to concentrate on volleyball. He didn’t want to think about what
all of this strangeness meant. In hindsight, he probably should have considered those new feelings and stayed home that day and seen his doctor. He could have avoided so much embarrassment.

As it was, practice hadn’t even really started and things fell apart when Tsukishima approached him talking about how he smelled good and looking at him as if he could swallow Shōyō whole. Yet, if any of that wasn’t crazy on its own, Shōyō felt pride to know Tsukishima thought he smelled good. Ew! What the hell was wrong with him?!

Then, Tsukishima had touched him, and that set off alarms in Shōyō’s head he really should have listened too but his body refused to heed. Those long fingers gripping his chin, the calloused thumb rubbing his lips, hell if it did not send Shōyō into orbit. His skin lit on fire, and he couldn’t stop shaking from fear and sudden want. And Tsukishima smiled at him. Smiled! What the hell?! Shōyō didn’t even know that snarky asshole was capable of any emotion except condescension or any expression except disgust.

Shōyō wanted to resist him but he couldn’t do anything, and when Tsukishima’s scent grew stronger—enveloping him in a cloud of safety and reassurance—well, any opposition Shōyō felt melted into submissive arousal. He popped a boner, right there in the middle of practice, and couldn’t care less. The only thing he’d wanted in that moment was for Tsukishima to dominate him, to have his way with him until he was incoherent and sated. What that meant, he was still unsure of. Was it sex? Shōyō didn’t know, he had no basis for comparison at fifteen. He’d just known he wanted to be completely overtaken by Tsukishima, covered in his scent until he couldn’t separate his own from Tsukishima’s.

And if that whole incident had been a spell, it was broken, thankfully, by Coach Ukai. However, the moment Shōyō had been pulled from the fog of desire, shame and humiliation sunk in, as well as complete understanding. He’d known at that moment the heat was on him and he’d ran.

That’s how he ended up at the hospital desperate to see his doctor. The thick, honey-like warmth he remembered from his first time was returning. It wasn’t as sudden, but it was increasing in intensity, which had Shōyō terrified that if Dr. Uemura took any longer, then he’d be masturbating in the lobby of the hospital, further shaming himself.

The elevator dinged causing Shōyō’s head to snap up expectantly. The stainless steel doors slid open and a familiar nurse stepped out, bright brown eyes searching the lobby. Nurse Isaki’s face eased into a comforting smile as she noticed Shōyō who’d remained seated but relieved when he recognized her. She walked over to him, bowing slightly.

“Good afternoon, Hinata-kun,” she said, her smile unfaltering. “Sorry about the wait, Dr. Uemura was in a meeting. I alerted him to your arrival as soon as he was free and he’s more than ready to see you now. So, if you will just follow me.” She turned, gesturing toward the elevator, signaling him to follow, but Shōyō didn’t move. Instead, his eyes dropped to his lap, his face darkening to a deep red.

“Is something wrong, Hinata-kun?”

Shōyō didn’t say anything for at first, embarrassed, but finally decided that this couldn’t be worse than the last time he’d been to the hospital.

He cleared his throat and said in a low voice, “I can’t get up.” He lifted hesitant and embarrassed eyes to the nurse who stood before him, gazing curiously at him. Understanding seem to dawn on her because she suddenly got serious, though Shōyō noticed how her mouth twitched. She nodded at him and looked briefly around before moving her body between him and anyone who might look up to see him. With one hand she gestured again for him to rise. Reluctantly, Shōyō did so, keeping his hands in front of him, trying to hide his very obvious tent. Shōyō refused to look at her then and
allowed her to direct him with a gentle hand on his arm. Once inside the elevator, he relaxed a little as Nurse Isaki stepped in front of him so she couldn’t see his shame. Shōyō was very thankful.

They didn’t say much in the short time they rode the elevator. Another individual did get on one floor above them and Shōyō tried to merge with the wall behind him when the person glanced briefly at him. They departed on the next floor and there was no other incident after that. The bell dinged when they reached their own destination on the fifth floor. The doors opened and Nurse Isaki steered beside Shōyō, once again leading him down the hallway and to one of the examination rooms Shōyō had been familiar with for most of his life.

“All right, Hinata-kun, have a seat and wait. Dr. Uemura will be with you shortly.” With that she stepped out of the room, closing the door behind her.

Shōyō sighed with relief, finally feeling like he could breathe again. He was there because he’d been encouraged to let staff know as soon as he noticed symptoms, and he desperately hoped the suppressant they had talked about would do its job.

Time seemed to slow to a crawl as Shōyō waited. He was starting to sweat as the rolling warmth picked up frequency. He was beginning to feel increasingly horny and having a harder time holding back from touching himself. He wasn’t uncomfortably hard at that point, but he definitely wouldn’t have minded a bit of friction against his dick.

Shōyō was seriously considering the pros and cons of quickly jacking off (he didn’t think it would take too long), when there was a knock on the door, and Dr. Uemura stepped in followed by a taller, more intimidating gentleman. Both wore a white lab coats over slacks and button up shirts. The newer man wore glasses, and his grey eyes held disguised excitement though his face was carefully neutral.

“Hello, Hinata-kun!” Dr. Uemura greeted. “We weren’t expecting you for another week or so but we’re glad you made it in. Sorry for the long wait.”

Shōyō glanced nervously at the other man before looking at Dr. Uemura, “I-it’s fine. Thank you for seeing me, Dr. Uemura.”

The doctor grinned at him as he took a seat on the rolling stool that sat by the examination table, “We heard you were having a little problem on your way up here.” He gestured in the direction of Shōyō’s crotch, chuckling lightly. Shōyō’s face heated up hotter than the warmth that washed over him, making him want to grit his teeth to stave off the moan that chased it.

“Don’t be nervous around me, Hinata-kun. I’m only here to observe how the suppressant works in case we need to adjust it,” the other man finally spoke up, and Shōyō turned his attention to him. “I’m Director Kida, by the way,” he added as if that was supposed to hold some importance.

Dr. Uemura glanced at Shōyō and then Director Kida as if he’d just realized he was in the room.

“That’s right, I apologize, Hinata-kun.” Dr. Uemura gestured to the Director, “This is my boss and the head of the department that oversees the management of your disorder.” Dr. Uemura turned back to Shōyō grinning proudly, “He’s also the genius that developed your suppressant.”

Shōyō’s eyes snapped back to the Director, who was smug and satisfied standing by the door with his arms crossed over his chest. However, before Shōyō could express any gratitude, another wave of warmth overcame him and his breathing stuttered involuntarily. He wanted to tell the Director thank you but he was becoming more agitated than anything, sitting in the uncomfortable room
exchanging pleasantries. He didn’t want to be unappreciative but he really wished they’d just hand over whatever medicine they had so the symptoms would go away. Shōyō really wanted to walk out of there, go home, lock himself in his room, and surround himself with every soft and comforting thing he owned. He felt so exposed and vulnerable sitting in the exam room while being observed like some sort of specimen. Also, Dr. Uemura and the Director didn’t smell right, and it put Shōyō’s hackles up.

“Well, I suppose we ought to cease your suffering and see if my magic potion works on you. Are you okay with that?” The Director watched Shōyō carefully, his dark eyes were sharp and calculating, and something about the man set Shōyō’s nerves on edge. Still, he nodded at the Director trying to withhold any reaction to the arousal that made his blood burn.

“Okay then,” Dr. Uemura clapped his hands together and rubbed them vigorously, “Let’s get started.”

Shōyō was confused, he had been under the impression that they were going to give him the suppressant the moment his symptoms showed. The confusion must have shown in his face because the Director addressed him and Shōyō tried to focus on him.

“Hinata-kun, we understand how...uncomfortable you must feel right now. Believe me, we will do whatever it takes to get your problem under control. With that being said, in order to make sure we adjust the medication accordingly, we still need to take blood samples while your symptoms are active. You will also need to stay the night so we can observe any side effects that may occur. Do you understand?”

Shōyō nodded, turning toward the wall and choosing to stay silent for the moment. He was a little upset and felt he’d been slightly mislead. He didn’t want to have to deal with the symptoms any longer than necessary, but they were going to force him to endure them instead of just handing over the medication. Shōyō wanted to cry from frustration. He was also incredibly horny, which was not helping his emotional condition at the moment.

“Hinata-kun, the sooner we get through the preliminary stuff, the sooner you can have the meds.” The Director placed a heavy hand on his shoulder and it took everything within Shōyō not to lash out at him. He had no right to invade Shōyō’s personal space like he did, and he definitely had not earned the right to touch him. A low growl emanated from Shōyō, a warning that the inferior male heeded as he released his hold on him, stepping back.

Shōyō relaxed a little bit, though still uneasy in the situation. He looked up at both men, catching a wordless look passing between them before they recovered quickly and smiled at him.

“I will fetch the nurse,” Director Kida offered, stepping out of the room.

Shōyō watched the door close then returned his attention to the wall.

“How are you feeling, Hinata-kun?” Dr. Uemura asked, leaning in slightly but keeping his hands to himself. Shōyō shrugged, still staring at the wall.

“Hinata-kun, I understand how humiliating this must be, but it helps if you answer our questions. The things you tell us really do help us.”

Shōyō allowed his gaze to drift to the doctor, “I-I,” he stuttered, clearing his throat and starting again, “I feel impatient.”

Dr. Uemura nodded sagely as if Shōyō had just divulged his greatest secret. “Totally understand.”
He continued to watch Shōyō expectantly but Shōyō really didn’t have anything else to say. It was but a few minutes that passed before the door was opening again, and Nurse Isaki was walking through with a bucket of empty tubes and a bunch of phlebotomy equipment, trailed by the Director.

“Lie back, Hinata-kun,” she asked in a gentle voice. Shōyō hesitated. As soon as he did as she asked, three adults would see plainly the effect of the heat. It shouldn’t matter since they’d all most likely witnessed it all during his last visit. However, he’d been so out of it then, and at that moment, Shōyō was more than sober enough to feel the shame.

“It’s okay, Hinata-kun,” Nurse Isaki plead in a kind, soft voice.

Shōyō reluctantly gave in, lying back with his eyes squeezed tightly shut. They may see his erection standing at attention, but Shōyō didn’t have to watch them watch him. There was the sound of plastic being jostled then Nurse Isaki’s presence was close to him. A second later, the tourniquet was tied to his arm and the area was being sanitized, then Shōyō felt the pinch of the needle being inserted. The line jerked a few times as she switched out tubes, then pressure was added as she slid out the needle, sticking a bandaid over the cotton ball.

“Okay, all done,” the nurse spoke, patting him arm kindly, and Shōyō opened his eyes to see her smiling sweetly at him. He gave her a half-smile in return, and sat up, flexing his arm. He looked at the bandaid and snorted, it was bright pink and had Hello Kitty on it. He looked her with a raised eyebrow and she winked at him.

“Is the MRI ready?” The Director asked Nurse Isaki. She nodded and the Director turned to Shōyō, “Alright, Hinata-kun, we are gonna leave you to change into a gown and then we will have someone escort you for your next test.” With that, everyone left.

Shōyō reluctantly changed into the thin, cotton gown that was provided for him. He had barely covered himself before there was a knock and another nurse opened the door to see if he was ready. A second later he was following the nurse through the halls, his hands hiding his hard on. Shōyō was thankful that this time his symptoms seemed to ebb and flow. He was still sweating and still feeling the honey-like warmth, but he was still coherent and functional.

It wasn’t long before he was laying on the hard surface of the patient table, and slowly sliding into the tunnel of the machine. Shōyō heard a click and some static, then Dr. Uemura’s disembodied voice came over the speaker, “Alright, Hinata-kun, I need you to lie very still while we get pictures of your brain.” Shōyō sighed, closing his eyes and focusing on his breathing. He was beginning to wish he’d just gone home. He wanted to be in his own bed at that moment, safe and cocooned in his fluffy blankets instead of chilled and trying to force himself to be still. Nothing about his day had gone right, he was stressed, and all anyone seemed to care about was the science-y stuff. Shōyō felt less like a human and more of like experiment. He whined, shifting on the flat table as more heat rolled across his body.

“Hinata-kun, you have to sit still, please.”

Shōyō huffed, they should try sitting still with a neglected hard on. He tried to think relaxing thoughts. Of course his mind went straight to volleyball, but that only brought up thoughts of Tsukishima and Kageyama, and once those thoughts filled his head they wouldn’t leave. Shōyō wondered if what happened with Tsukishima at practice would have happened between him and Kageyama if he’d been at practice instead.

He learned the night before from Noya-san that Tsukishima and Kageyama had nearly beat each other up after he left. He also learned that Kageyama had been suspended from practice until Coach Ukai, Takeda-sensei, and their captain and Suga discussed the situation and consequences. Shōyō
had thought that unfair, assuming Tsukishima had been just as at fault, and questioned why he hadn’t received the same punishment. Noya-san didn’t have any answers at the time, but Shōyō had received a text the following morning from Daichi about what had been decided.

After the whole incident at the gym between him and Tsukishima, Shōyō was very confused as to why he’d reacted to that jerk as he had. Yeah, he smelled great, and yeah, on some level Shōyō guessed the beanpole was physically attractive, but Shōyō wouldn’t lie and say he’d ever considered liking the guy as anything other than a teammate. If anything, Shōyō figured he’d be more likely to react that way to Kageyama. Not that he thought of Bakayama in that way at all.

Shōyō sighed, grumbling to himself. The whole thing was weird and confusing. For most of his life he’d been more focused on volleyball rather than dating and sex or whatever. Even in middle school his classmates had been so sure he’d joined the girl’s volleyball team to hit on the girls when he’d only wanted people to practice with them. He could appreciate some of them for their good looks but he was ultimately more interested in their skills.

Color him surprised when he gets to high school, and the first time he’s distracted by romance and what not it happens to be because of two boys. What the hell?! Shōyō had not given himself much time to question sexuality, it had always seemed so...abstract, as if it didn’t apply to him. And yet, here he was now, completely thrown over these weird feelings concerning two male teammates.

Shōyō squirmed again as the waves of heat increased in frequency and intensity. The longer he laid there with nothing to distract him, the foggier his mind became. Thinking of Tsukishima and Kageyama so much wasn’t helping and, oddly, made him want to roll over and put his butt in the air. That was another issue in itself. Shōyō has never been opposed to masturbation. Well, until his experience the month prior which kind of scarred him for life on the subject. However, that didn’t mean he resisted doing the deed when it popped up. But the difference for him currently as opposed to before the incident is what gets him off and what doesn’t. It used to be simply stroking himself to orgasm did the job. Yet, since his first experience with the heat, Shōyō had discovered an increasing interest with fingering himself. He hasn’t tried since the last time, he’d been too afraid and, well, it’s really kind of weird. But only handling his dick takes a lot longer to bring himself to completion, and on more than one occasion he’d hesitantly touched that...area out of desperation.

Now, lying in the MRI machine, the heat building and strengthening the longer he is forced to go without the suppressant, Shōyō’s desire to finger himself grows, as well as the sensation of slickness pooling between his ass cheeks. He wanted to be full, to be…

...he can’t put it into words, but he knows he wants it. Badly.

“Hinata-kun, again, please hold still. We are almost finished then we can administer the suppressant.” Dr. Uemura sounded exasperated with him which only served to irritate Shōyō more.

Shōyō was at his wits end and those assholes were pressing his patience. Tired of being poked and prodded and toyed with, tired of feeling so needy and unsatisfied, he rolled over and wriggled out of the damnable machine. As soon as he was free and his feet hit the floor, he turned to the observation window, his eyebrows drawn in anger and lips curled into a snarl, “I don’t give a fuck about your tests! I want the goddamn suppressant. Now!”

Through the window, Dr. Uemura watched him with shock over the computer monitors and Nurse Isaki glanced between him and the Director. Director Kida, who’d been leaning over the doctor, stood up, his expression thoughtful as he observed Shōyō panting and growling in the opposite room. After a moment, the Director turned to Nurse Isaki and said something Shōyō couldn’t hear. The nurse nodded before darting out of the observation room, and the Director leaned back over, reaching for something out of view.
“That’s fine, Hinata-kun, we have what we need.” He stood back up, never once taking his eyes off of Shōyō. Shōyō gave him a curt nod and as soon as the patient table slid back into place behind him, he jumped up and sat, waiting. Again. Only a short time passed before the door opened and Shōyō let out a warning growl to whoever was on the other side. Nurse Isaki appeared, nervous and darting glances at the two men who were still watching Shōyō and making comments that still couldn’t hear.

Nurse Isaki gestured to Shōyō with trembling hands, “Follow me, Hinata-kun. I’ll show to your room.”

“I don’t want to go anywhere, I want the stupid suppressant,” he snapped, his frustration and anger growing as the true heat started to take over. The room he was in wasn’t the best place to prepare himself, but he would make due. “Bring me blankets, it’s cold and too...impersonal in here,” he demanded, sliding off the table and sniffing around the room. Nothing about that place smelled right but he knew he was out of time and he needed to settle somewhere now.

He rounded on the door when Nurse Isaki failed to do as he asked. All three individuals were staring at him, Nurse Isaki still stood in the doorway, and both men now stood in the observation room. The situation just smelled wrong to Shōyō, the air saturated with the tang of fear and uncertainty. Behind the nurse, a few other men appeared.

Nurse Isaki held up her hands in defense, “Hinata-kun, if you would just come with me I can take to your room. There are plenty of blankets there, I promise.”

Shōyō began pacing, extremely agitated, low growls issuing from him as he darted glances between the door, the doctor, and Director. He needed space and they were all making him feel crowded, trapped. Shōyō whimpered in distress suddenly wishing Tsukishima were there. He started trembling, he needed comfort and he needed to satisfy the heat. Why were these people insistent on stopping him, why couldn’t they leave him alone?

“Hinata-kun…” the nurse gently called, taking a step toward him.

Shōyō stiffened then crouched, prepared to lunge at anyone who came to close. Shōyō vaguely felt his teeth sharpening and he bared them with a deeper growl, his eyes narrowing.

Dr. Uemura pushed himself into the room, approaching Shōyō with caution but also with confidence, “Shōyō, calm down! If you want that fucking suppressant get ahold of yourself.”

Suppressant...yes, he wanted that. Shōyō warily watched the doctor, stilling and quieting his growls to a low rumble.

“Okay, okay, we’re gonna walk out of here now and head to the room we have set up for you,” the doctor stated, stepping aside and waving at the others to move out of the way. They did, quickly, and Nurse Isaki ran off, disappearing down the hall.

Shōyō followed reluctantly, hesitating at the door, nosing the air before stepping into the hall. Dr. Uemura followed, squeezing by him, trying to keep a respectful distance. He turned left and walked off, Shōyō trailing behind him, on guard and keeping an eye out for anyone who might try and grab him. They turned down another hall, then Dr. Uemura stopped before an opened door, moving to the side and raising hand to indicate they were at his room. Shōyō tipped toed up to the door and peeked inside. It was the same set up as last time and he immediately relaxed. It wasn’t home but he could cope. He walked up to the bed and sighed, the hospital blankets piled atop the mattress were thin but they’d given him a lot of them. He immediately set about arranging them into something more suitable for his needs. When he was finished, Shōyō climbed inside, attempting to snuggle down into
Shōyō was overcome with a bit of sadness as he wiggled around, trying to get comfortable. Nothing smelled like home or like him, and nothing smelled like the wonderful musk he craved, the scent Tsukishima carried earlier that day. He whimpered, feeling the loss and the loneliness.

A shadow hovered over him and Shōyō growled again, warning them to back off. The heat was approaching and he just wanted to be left alone.

“Hinata-kun,” whispered Dr. Uemura, and Shōyō tensed up but didn’t look at the doctor. “We’d like to administer the suppressant now.”

Shōyō hesitated, then gave the slightest nod.

“Good. Okay, Hinata-kun, I’m going to touch you now so it would please me if you didn’t bite me.” The doctor’s tone was playful but Shōyō knew he was also serious. He nodded again, closing his eyes.

His gown was opened in the back, exposing his rear end to the cold air. Shōyō whimpered again, the feel of unwanted hands making him curl into a tight ball. Something cold was rubbed onto the skin on one cheek, and then there was a sharp pain. It burned where they gave him the injection, and Shōyō’s breath hitched. However, the effects were instantaneous. Within minutes his whole body relaxed, and Shōyō started to feel normal. Well, normal and exhausted.

"Your family has been notified of your situation, Hinata-kun. Try and rest and we will talk more later."

Shōyō yawned and nodded, snuggling down into the blankets. He closed his eyes and thought of nothing else until he woke the next morning.

He was released on the following day, suffering no side-effects and apologizing for his behavior. They were kind enough to dismiss the whole thing as part of his disorder and told him that the injection was a one time thing. Instead they gave him a medicine bottle with six, small, oblong blue pills and he was told to take one each month as soon as he noticed symptoms. He also left that morning with an appointment to see Dr. Junko again as soon as Golden Week was over.

Shōyō walked away from the hospital feeling badly about the way he acted, but not feeling as ashamed as the last time he was there. He also walked away gripping the bottle of medication, feeling happier than he had in a long while.

Chapter End Notes

I don't have a chapter title to post here, so I hope this will do.

Next:
Golden Week training and Kenma's POV.
Once again, thank you all! I appreciate every one of you. Kudos and Comments are so very welcome.

BIMB :)
Hey everyone! Sorry about taking so long to update. I know I said I'd be getting back on a more reliable schedule after the last update, but I got hit with a major bout of writer's block. I got so pissed off at it, I nearly abandoned the story altogether. A little melodramatic? Lol, perhaps. I truly have a plan for this story, I just wish I had taken the time to write it out before I started writing. Anyway, I hate this chapter, FYI. Like, really hate it, but I didn't want to start over...again.

I wish I could say that from here on out there will be regular updates, but that's not gonna happen. I don't even have the next chapter written out yet, though I do plan to start it immediately. I just wanted to get this one out there so I could finally move on, despite how disappointed I am in it.

Also, as of Monday, I am employed, and between work and family obligations, updates will be just as sporadic as usual. Sorry. I promise not to give up if you don't.

About this chapter, it's in various pov's. They're unconnected, for the most part, but they are consecutive. They lead up to Karasuno's practice match with Nekoma. The training camp and practice match themselves are not important, I'm more focused on what everyone is thinking, so there won't be any scenes from the practice camp specifically. Not this one, anyway.

Well, I'll shut up now. Please enjoy.

BIMB :)

First Year, High School, Spring

Tobio was not a happy camper. He'd missed about five days of practice because of his rut and his stupid punishment, and when he returned, it was to hear rumors of some weird sexual tension between the asshole and the dumbass.

He knew it shouldn’t bother him; Tsukishima was about as important as the old, dirty gum you find stuck to the sidewalk along the road, and while he was—technically—friends with Hinata, the dumbass wasn’t required to answer to him. However, Tobio couldn’t help feeling a sense of jealousy. All he heard were snippets of the rumor among his very talkative teammates when the other two weren’t around, but the thought that any kind of physical attraction between Hinata and the asshole seemed ridiculous seeing as though both of them rarely got along. Tobio attempted to ask Hinata about it, however, he only received nervous laughter and half-baked excuses that pretty much solidified the rumor as true. Even though he wasn’t able to get a straight answer from Hinata, he still had a rough sense of what had happened, and the thought of it soured his stomach.

Tobio couldn’t understand it, Tsukishima and Hinata got along about as well as fire and water, so
how could there have been any sort of...thing between them? It made it all the more frustrating because Tobio, much to his horror, spent his rut fantasizing about the dumbass.

However, despite his initial jealousy, things appeared to go back to normal the week they all returned. Whatever had developed—if there had been anything really there to begin with—seemed to have petered out as Hinata went back to annoying him and ignoring Tsukishima, for the most part.

Tobio did find one aspect of the whole mess the previous week very interesting; he, Hinata, and that asshole had all missed practice and school within the same time frame. Although he was the only one to be banned from practice for a week (a fact he was resentful of), both Hinata and Tsukishima had missed a few days, too. Hinata said he was sick those days, though Tobio didn’t believe him one iota. Hinata smelled different when he returned to practice the day after Tobio. His scent, while still sweet and comforting, was muted—dulled. Hinata gave no indication he noticed, but Tobio was pretty sure it had to do with the asshole, and something had changed in the air between those two, even if he was unsure what. Regardless, he hunted down Tsukishima during lunch, the day after the asshole returned to school, determined to find out what he did.

Tobio found Tsukishima hiding in an empty stairwell, reclining on the steps, one arm slung over his knee while the other rested in his lap, cradling his phone. His head rested against the concrete wall, headphones covering his ears, some type of angry alternative music floating from them in the quiet of the hall. His eyes were closed, and his expression was uncharacteristically relaxed for once, smoothed out in an almost serene way.

However, no matter how quiet Tobio tread, it was virtually impossible for Tobio to sneak up on him, not that he was trying. As he drew closer, Tsukishima’s nose scrunched up in displeasure. Tobio also expressed disgust as Tsukishima’s scent grew stronger; he didn’t think he’d ever get used to that smell.

As he came to a stop in front of the asshole, bright gold eyes filled with loathing settled on him. Tsukishima paused his music, removing his headphones, letting them rest around his slender neck.

“And to what do I owe the honor of his Highness’s presence?” Tsukishima mocked. He had a real talent of making a simple prim greeting sound really condescending. Tobio refrained from sneering, refusing to get into an argument with the asshole if only to avoid getting into more trouble, and also to make the encounter as quick as possible.

“What did you do to Hinata?” As expected, Tobio jumped right to the heart of the matter in usual blunt fashion.

For a second, Tsukishima’s eyes widened while the tips of his ears darkened so faintly Tobio might have missed it if he hadn’t been standing so close. However, Tsukishima recovered quickly, darting his eyes away.

“Why assume I did anything, King?” His tone was strained and his scent grew sharper, more tangy. Tobio would almost be amused that the asshole was actually flustered if he wasn’t feeling irrationally angry all of a sudden. Even if he never learned the real details of the event, both Hinata’s avoidance and Tsukishima’s discomfort were enough to convince him that something happened—something intimate between them, and something that didn’t include Tobio.

“Stay away from him, Tsukishima,” Tobio demanded, a low growl adding intent to his threat.

Tsukishima stared at him, expression carefully neutral until one eyebrow raised, the corner of his wicked mouth curling into a smirk. “Jealous, King?” The asshole’s scent flooded the quiet corridor, almost overwhelming, and definitely nauseating.
Tobio loved volleyball. In a sense, one could say it was his life. All of his dreams for his future hinged on being part of a team that gets noticed. That being said, despite warnings to behave, he found it nearly impossible when Tsukishima was involved. At that point, there was little Tobio could do to stop his body from reacting to the odor that permeated the air. It was meant to intimidate, but Tobio wasn’t one to back down. His own scent flooded the hall, pushing back; he could feel it, even if he couldn’t smell it. His nails and teeth grew, sharpened and ready to inflict wounds. Without thinking of the consequences, Tobio leaned into Tsukishima’s personal space, wrapping long fingers around his neck and squeezing just slightly. His eyes locked onto gold irises. To Tsukishima’s credit, he barely reacted, only wincing slightly when Tobio’s hand came into contact with the skin of his neck.

“I’m warning you, Tsukishima,” quiet rage saturated his tone and his chest vibrated with the strength of his threatening, low growl, “stay away from him.”

Tsukishima’s gold eyes burned, never once flinching or losing eyes contact. He stretched his head forward, straining against the hand that pinned his neck, until his breath ghosted against Tobio’s mouth and nose. He sneered, mouth twisted in anger, canines flashing in the artificial light of the hall, “Or what, Kageyama?” Tsukishima’s throat vibrated against Tobio’s palm with his own deep growl.

For a moment, both boys glared at one another. The tension stretched between them like a rubber band pulled almost to breaking point, the air around them thick with scents battling for prominence. Then as suddenly as it was there, it dissipated as a small group of students rounded the corner, talking and laughing amongst themselves. Their conversation stalled as they noticed the two boys on the steps, and Tobio quickly removed his hand from around Tsukishima’s throat, pulling back to a more appropriate distance. The group of students stared at them, concern in their eyes, and the bitterness of fear in the light scents they gave off. Tobio looked away, trying to hide his appearance, and he noticed that Tsukishima did the same. The students moved on quickly, not wanting to get involved.

Before long they disappeared, and Tobio was once again left alone with Tsukishima.

“You have nothing to fear from me, King.”

Tobio started at the suddenness of Tsukishima’s voice shattering the silence. He gazed over at Tsukishima; his expression resumed its usual boredom, but his eyes were still filled with raw hatred. Tobio blinked in confusion, then his face contorted with disdain, “What the hell would I have to fear from you?”

Tsukishima clicked his tongue, pushing his glasses up his nose, “You’re so dumb. What I mean is that you can have him...the Shrimp. Don’t know why you want him, or why you think I do, but, since you’re obviously feeling threatened by me,” Tobio scoffed, offended that Tsukishima could think he felt threatened by him, and Tsukishima rolled his eyes, continuing, “since you feel threatened by me, I promise not to get in your way.”

Tobio wanted to laugh, it wasn’t like that. He just didn’t want Tsukishima to have him. He didn’t want Tsukishima, in all his hateful, hurtful ways, to break the only real partner Tobio had ever been gifted with. It wasn’t like that.

It wasn’t, right?

Tobio didn’t know, honestly. His feelings about Hinata were so warped and confusing he wasn’t sure how to understand them. All he knew was that he had to keep Tsukishima away from him.

Tobio shrugged, “Whatever.”
“Anything else, your Majesty?” Tsukishima asked, though he’d already placed his headphones on his ears, finger hovering over the screen of his phone. He stared back at Tobio expectantly. Tobio sighed, what else was there to say?

“I hate you.” Well, there was that.

“Ditto,” Tsukishima retorted, then tuned him out as he resumed listening to his music. He closed his eyes and settled back against the wall again, effectively dismissing Tobio.

Tobio’s lips curled in displeasure, every particle of his being despising the jerk who sat on the floor in front of him. Even in that position, as Tobio towered over him, he couldn’t help but feel small compared to Tsukishima. He hated it, he hated the asshole.

The only gratification he could find as he turned and walked away were the light purple imprints of his fingers against the pale color of Tsukishima’s neck.

~O~

“Do you think they’re Yakuza?”

Noya and Tanaka were hanging outside, leaning against the cool metal guardrail that bordered the aqueduct they crossed daily on their way home. Noya had splurged on a Gari Gari-kun, while Tanaka opted for a Super Cup. Both boys were munching away in comfortable silence when Noya brought up the topic. Tanaka paused to look at Noya, his small spoon hovering between the cup of ice cream and his open mouth.

“What the hell are you on about?” He asked, raising an eyebrow as he slowly lowered his spoon to the cup.

Noya bit off another soda flavored hunk of ice, sucking on it in quiet thoughtfulness, then turned to Tanaka and replied, “I’m talking about the first years.”

Tanaka guffawed, nearly dropping his ice cream cup, licking the sticky sweetness off his knuckles when some spilled over the rim.

“You’re kidding, right? I mean, do you honestly believe Hinata is part of some syndicate?” His expression bled incredulity at the very thought the small, ginger darling could ever be connected to anything criminal.

“No, hear me out, Ryuu! It makes perfect sense! Maybe Shō-kun is like...like Yakuza royalty and Grumpy-yama and Dickshima were like placed here-here to woo him in order to join houses or some shit!”

Tanaka stared at Noya, his eyes wide with wonder, or maybe just bewilderment. Noya apparently had a very active imagination.

“That’s the dumbest thing I’ve ever heard, Noya,” Tanaka deadpanned. Noya glared at him.

“Why is my idea so unbelievable?” He snapped back, frustrated his closest buddy would doubt his genius so easily.
Tanaka shrugged, shoveling more ice cream into his mouth, his eyebrows sitting high on his head. “For one thing, I think you’re giving Tsukishima and Kageyama more credit than they deserve. It’s more likely they’re just a couple of punks in need of a good ass whooping. Second, and most important, they’re all a bunch of dudes.”

“Homosexuality is an actual thing, Ryuu,” Noya snorted derisively.

“I know that, dumbass! All I’m saying is how likely is it that all three of them are gay yakuza members?”

“Are you suggesting that not a single Yakuza member exists that could possibly swing for the same team?”

“No! Idiot! I’m saying there’s no way that three of our four first years could all be gay and none of them definitely Yakuza.”

“Would it be a problem if they were?”

“Were what?! Gay or Yakuza?! Holy fuck, Noya!”

“Both, shithead! It’s what we are talking about!”

“What the fuck are we talking about? I can’t remember.”

Noya sighed, staring at the small bit of ice attached to the stick of his rapidly disappearing treat, “It’s just...they’re so... gah.” He looked at Tanaka, his face contorted into a sardonic scowl as he waved his hands around in a vague manner, unable to put his thoughts into actual words. The flick of his wrist, however, caused the last piece of his popsicle to fly off the stick, and Noya cursed his luck, whining about his loss.

“Do you remember how Tsukishima and Shōyō acted at practice the other day?” Noya inquired a moment later, launching his empty stick into the stream below them and watching it float on the current before disappearing into the pipe beneath their feet.

Tanaka scoffed, “How can I not? If I could pour bleach into my brain to forget it, I happily would. I’m scarred for life.” He gave an exaggerated shudder, then punched Noya in the arm, “Thanks for reminding me, by the way, you asshole!”

Noya squawked, glaring up at Tanaka while rubbing his arm, “You’re welcome, jackass. And for your information, the only reason I brought it up is because their behavior just bothers me. I can’t stop thinking about it.”

Tanaka stared at Noya, his mouth hanging open in open disgust, “You think about it?! Like, you actively remember Tsukishima and Hinata standing around with fucking boners?!”

Noya looked appalled, “No, you nitwit! I don’t think about that part. I was only trying to understand why they act the way they do. Like, what is going on with them? And, also, the fact that both Hinata and Tsukishima had hard on’s suggests at least two of them are gay.”

“Why the fuck are we discussing Tsukishima and Hinata’s dicks?” Tanaka complained, thrusting his spoon into his now empty cup of ice cream. He looked around for some place to trash it but the area they lounged in had no receptacle.

“We aren’t talking about their dicks, stupid, we’re talking about their fucking weird behavior.” Noya slapped his hand to his face, dragging it down and pulling at the flesh, making him look like some
sort of crazy person.

Tanaka sighed, “So what? They’re gay. Who the fuck cares, Noya. I couldn’t give a shit if they fuck every guy in school as long as we win Nationals.”

Noya leaned back against the rail and closed his eyes, taking a slow deep breath. When he opened them and looked at Tanaka, he was watching Noya, concern darkening his face.

“Why does it bother you so much?” Tanaka asked quietly.

“Why doesn’t it bother you?!” Noya snapped. “I don’t care about their sexual preferences either, by the way, but I do care about why they act like fucking animals. They’re crazy, and...and frightening.” Noya paused, and Tanaka observed him patiently. Noya drummed his fingers on the metal rail as he stared off into the distance, his eyes glazed over, his thoughts far away. He blinked once and turned to look at Tanaka, “Something is wrong, Ryuu. Mark my words, Something is coming and it’s gonna be bad. I know it.”

Tanaka sighed, his gaze falling across the road and beyond, “I’m worried, too, Yuu.” Silence fell between them for a moment, then Tanaka sideways Noya who was picking at his nails with a frown on his face. Tanaka bumped shoulders with him, and Noya looked up at him from under thick, dark lashes. He was still frowning. Tanaka grinned at him and bumped him again. Noya responded with a small, uncertain smile.

“Hey, Yuu, I know shit is...weird right now. But we have so much other stuff to worry about. Like getting through prelims. Let’s just focus on that, for now, and let the captain deal with the bigger shit.”

“Ryuu...” Noya sighed, worry etching lines in his normally confident expression.

Tanaka placed a hand on Noya’s shoulder and squeezed, trying to comfort his best friend, “We can trust Daichi, Yuu, right? He’d never let anything happen to the team.”

Noya gazed up at Tanaka, his eyes going from dull and scared, to blazing determination, “Yeah, Ryuu, we can.”

Tanaka nodded, “Yeah, yeah.” Suddenly he chuckled, and Noya watched him, nonplussed.

“What’s so funny?” Noya asked, his tone confused.

Tanaka shook his head, and still grinning said, “Training camp is gonna be interesting.”

Noya groaned, “Ugh, five days stuck with those three. Shōyō’s fine, but Kageyama and Tsukishima are gonna be hell.”

Tanaka nodded in agreement and pushed off the rail. Noya followed suit, falling into step beside his best friend. Tanaka slowed his gait enough so Noya’s shorter legs could easily keep up.

“Maybe we should form a Chibi Protection Squad. Maybe keep those two as far from him as possible. Honestly, I kinda feel sorry for Hinata-kun.” Tanaka scratched at his chin and glanced at Noya.

Noya nodded, “Yeah, I like Shō-kun. He doesn’t deserve their nasty attention, he could do so much better. If he’s gay, that is.”

“Yeah, he’s too pure for those animals,” Tanaka enthusiastically agreed. “He’s like, innocent.”
“Like sunshine.”

“On a cloudy day.”

“Like, when it’s cold outside…”

“He’s like the month of May.”

Both of them started giggling before screeching, “I gue~s s you’d say, what can make me feel this way..”

“Shōyō..”

“Shōyō…”

“Talkin’ bout Shō~yō”

Several minutes and a few bad dance moves later, both Tanaka and Noya were laughing hysterically at their own antics. When they got to the corner where they split ways, Noya grinned up at Tanaka, still panting and said, “Thanks, Ryuu.”

Tanaka shrugged, smiling down at his friend, “No problem, man. It’s what best friends do, right?”

Noya wacked him on the back, causing Tanaka to stumble a few steps forward and cry out in pain. “Best bros for life!” He hollered, hands on hips and completely serious.

Tanaka stood up and punched him in the arm, “Damn straight!”

-O-

Things were hell.

Yamaguchi has always known his best friend was a little strange; as close as he was to Tsukki, it would have been impossible to ignore how different he was, however he may have tried to hide it. But, Tsukki’s differences never mattered to Yamaguchi, his loyalty extended beyond such minor incongruities. Tsukki was his friend and more; he was the most important person in Yamaguchi’s life.

Yet, since coming to Karasuno, Yamaguchi could feel Tsukki pulling away a little each day. Actually, it started in middle school, during their last competition, when Tsukki began acting weirder than usual. Yamaguchi had thought the changes were a fluke, that whatever happened to Tsukki would pass and be just another tick of strangeness among all the others. For a while, it appeared Yamaguchi had been correct. Until Karasuno. Until Kageyama and Hinata.

Yamaguchi was familiar enough by then to recognize similarities to Tsukki in the oddness of the freak duo; the territorial possessiveness, the intensity of their eyes that made them more than...just more than. The way they scented the air like dogs, or the teeth and nails. The low, menacing growls that sometimes made Yamaguchi ache for and fear Tsukki.

Yamaguchi saw all of these things, and watched from the sidelines, both as a player and as a boy in love. He watched Tsukki as he and Kageyama challenged each other in a dance of dominance, constantly pushing and poking at invisible defenses to see who would break first. He also stood back
and watched as Tsukki grew more and more obsessed with Hinata, even as he stubbornly pretended Hinata meant nothing to him.

Yamaguchi would like to say that Tsukki’s behavior in the gym—the way he dogged Hinata with an obvious intent—was surprising. But in all honesty, Yamaguchi knew it was just a matter of time. He’d tracked the way Tsukki’s eyes fixed on him whenever he was near, the way they soften or darkened depending on the presence of Kageyama. And, it’s not like Yamaguchi could totally blame him.

Yamaguchi, as loath as he was to admit it, was jealous. However, regardless of his feelings for his best friend, Yamaguchi couldn’t find it in his heart to completely hate Hinata for capturing Tsukki’s attention. It was Hinata, after all, and Yamaguchi was gay enough to admit the small, red haired, I’ve-never-had-a-bad-day-or-met-a-challenge-I-couldn’t-overcome-and-everyone-is-my-friend...wait, where was he? Oh yeah, Yamaguchi could admit Hinata was attractive. That was, if you were into dainty, doe-eyed boys, which—obviously—Tsukki was.

Yamaguchi stared across the gym, watching Hinata and Kageyama bicker with each other. In a few days they would be facing their fated rival team and the duo was, as usual, outshining everyone with their super quick. By now they had a good record of succeeding more than they failed, and Yamaguchi couldn’t help but be impressed by their dedication. Impressed and slightly bitter.

His eyes flicked to Tsukki as he swaggered by the two, his lips moving as he said something no doubt inciting. Kageyama and Hinata immediately cease fighting amongst themselves, flinging their heated glares and words toward Yamaguchi’s best friend. Tsukki walked away smirking, but his gold eyes were bland, as if he continued to torment them because it’s expected rather than because he enjoyed it. Yamaguchi’s heart felt heavy, and he placed a hand tentatively over it. His attention was diverted to the duo who had completely stopped arguing. Kageyama said something to Hinata who responded with a nod, then Kageyama walked off, grabbing a stray ball from the floor as he went. Hinata didn’t budge, but his gaze followed Tsukki, his expression a mixture of emotions Yamaguchi can’t keep up with before they passed. Hinata shook his head and took off, jogging to catch up to Kageyama, and Yamaguchi briefly caught his eye before averting his gaze, sipping from his water bottle as nonchalantly as possible.

Tsukki moved to stand beside him, dragging his towel over his sweaty face. He carried his own water bottle, and he lifted it to his mouth, Yamaguchi watching his throat bob when he swallowed a mouthful. Tsukki was so graceful in all he did, his movements deliberate and never wasted. He had such control over every part of his body, from his long, slender fingers to his lanky, muscular legs. He was beautiful and fearsome all at once.

The sound of squeaking sneakers and balls being spiked reverberated throughout the gym; it’s background, noise to Yamaguchi’s faraway thoughts. Tsukki ich- ed, and Yamaguchi pulled his mind back to the present, his eyes searching for the subject of Tsukki’s derision. He saw Kageyama and Hinata grinning at each other just as Tsukki scoffed, “It’s disgusting how talented, and at the same time, useless the Shrimp is.”

Yamaguchi chuckled, looking up at Tsukki once again, “I doubt he will remain that way.”

Tsukki doesn’t look at him, his golden gaze locked on a head of wild red hair that danced like a flame as Hinata bounced happily around his teammates, basking in their praises. He snorted, “You mean he might become even more useless?”

Yamaguchi grinned and rolled his eyes, “Careful Tsukki, someone might think your jealous.” It’s just was a joke, but Yamaguchi didn’t actually mean to say it. He knew that Tsukki harbored some envy for Hinata’s abilities, they just never talked about it. He cringed as he expected to be chided by his best friend, and he prepared his apology.
Tsukki still hadn’t taken his eyes off Hinata, the gold of his irises gleaming in the artificial light of the gym as they followed their teammates’s movements. His expression was tense, his eyebrows furrowed and mouth pulled into a thin line.

“I’m not jealous of Hinata.”

His words weren’t harsh or defensive, and Yamaguchi was momentarily shocked as he witnessed Tsukki’s cheeks brighten subtly, the barest red gracing his features. Then, Yamaguchi’s heart doubled its beat, the thundering behind his ribs almost painful. A heavy ball of dread and despair sat in his gut as he turned his head to look at Hinata once again, his big, brown eyes repeatedly flicking to Tsukki, shy and full of pride, before darting away. Kageyama suddenly stepped up to Hinata, shielding him from view, and the moment passed.

Yamaguchi inhaled and exhaled slowly, refusing to show the hurt he felt. “Sorry, Tsukki” he apologized, though it’s not for what he said.

Yamaguchi watched as Kageyama distracted Hinata, saying something that earned him a bright, happy smile and bubbly laughter. Hinata shouted something at the setter, most likely a teasing insult, before dashing off to yell excitedly at Noya. Kageyama glanced over his shoulder, smirking arrogantly at Tsukki. Yamaguchi turned to look at his best friend, dark anger lowering like a curtain over his expression.

“What ever,” Tsukki dismissed, and walked away, leaving Yamaguchi without so much as a backward glance of acknowledgement.

Yamaguchi sighed, he not sure what to do. He didn’t want Hinata to win, but he doesn’t have a lot of faith in himself or his abilities to capture Tsukki’s attention. He needed to do something—anything to stand out. He had to find a way to make Tsukki look at him.

Yamaguchi turned his attention back to the court, Kageyama and Hinata have resumed their positions again. Ennoshita threw the ball and Kageyama got under it, setting it in perfect form just as Hinata streaked across the court like a comet. He leapt into the air, his small but powerful legs launching him upward as if he had taken flight on grand wings. As usual, the ball met him without so much as peeking at it, his hand swinging forward to shoot it down with a harsh SMACK against the floor. Hinata landed, almost in slow motion, touching down like an astronaut stepping onto the moon.

Yamaguchi sighed. How could he compete with that?

~O~

Suga trotted down the empty street, a small smile lighting his face up as he chuckled to himself. The first years were so much trouble, but Shō-kun was delightful in the way he felt like a little brother you constantly had to guide. He was strong, there was no doubt about that, but he was also so delicate, so new.

Suga’s head swiveled side to side as he absentmindedly perused the streets for a shock of red hair that would stand out in any setting. Shō-kun was an anomaly in Suga’s opinion, a contradiction that was constantly surprising and frustrating him. He had little to no game sense, but he had so much talent. He had limited technique when it came to plays (his receives were horrific), but he was a
creature that constantly evolved, adapting and changing as needed. Suga had little doubt that they were seeing the demon as he awakened, not as he would be at full strength. He was also capable of challenging anyone and everyone to be at their best lest they be left behind, yet, he made friends so easily. It was impossible to despise or be jealous of him, you only wanted to be on the same level, to be his equal.

As much as Suga loved and enjoyed the first year, he was also afraid of him. He was afraid of living in his shadow, being passed over as mediocre compared to Shōyō’s rising star. You would think Suga would be more worried about Kageyama and his genius abilities, but Suga knew that while Kageyama was certainly capable, it would be Shōyō who turned the spotlight on him; Kageyama never shined brighter than when he tossed to his partner. Together, the two pulled the attention of everyone to them, and everyone else was left as background, mere supporting roles to their headlining stories.

Suga sighed. He should know better than to get stuck in his thoughts like this. It did nothing for him but sink his mood and cause him to second think his decision to stay on the team. But, the problem was that he would most likely be stuck as second string, and while it didn’t piss him off, it definitely depressed him. He wanted to play as much as anyone else, however, he wasn’t childish enough to call life unfair. He just had to figure out a way to up his game.

Suga turned right and headed downhill until he came to an intersection. As he approached, he heard voices, and he sped up, trotting past the street sign and looking around.

*Found him.*

There Shōyō was, his back to Suga as he appeared to watch two other guys disappear around a corner, one of them barely taller than Shō-kun.

“Hinata! It’s about time, I’ve been looking all over for you!”

The first year startled and squeaked, running up to Suga. His big, brown eyes were worried as he explained that he ran too fast and got lost.

Suga chuckled, and ruffled his vibrant red hair, “It’s alright Shō-kun, I was just worried about you.”

Shōyō smiled up at Suga in relief, a young pup thrilled by the praise of his master.

“C’mon, Shō-kun, we ought to catch up to the others before Kageyama or Daichi has a conniption.”

“Osu!”

Minutes later Suga was jogging down the street next to Shōyō, the warm sun hanging in the cloudless blue sky and making them sweat even more. They were mostly quiet, the sound of their heavy breathing and their sneakers scuffing the asphalt filling the comfortable silence between them, and leaving Suga to his thoughts.

“That boy was a setter.”

Suga blinked back into the present and turned his head toward Shōyō, his brow crinkled in confusion. “What boy?” He asked.

Shōyō didn’t look at him, but Suga could see from his profile how intense his gaze was and he shivered. Shōyō was an anomaly; sweet, enthusiastic, undaunted by trials, but also strange in a way that unnerved Suga.
“The boy on the street where you found me.”

“Oh,” Suga replied, remembering the two that were walking away when he found Shōyō, “I didn’t recognize their colors.”

“Yeah,” Shōyō huffed, “I don’t think they were from around here, and I didn’t get a chance to ask.”

“Hm,” was Suga’s noncommittal response.

“He was barely taller than me.”

Suga’s eyes widened in surprise, though considering Shōyō was a middle blocker he shouldn’t have been all that amazed. Suga glanced at Shōyō, he looked more determined than ever.

“Shō-kun, you always work hard.” Suga meant for his words to be comforting since Shōyō seemed agitated by the unfamiliar setter, but he seemed to find a different meaning behind Suga’s consolation.

“Well, yeah,” he started, his expression pensive, “but I need to practice a whole lot more.”

Suga stared at him, dumbfounded by his blind devotion. Suga wanted to get better, he wanted to play, and he wanted to win. But Shōyō was on a whole other level bordering on fanaticism.

Shōyō continued, “I want more, you know? Right now, all I am is what Kageyama makes me. But I want to stand on my own will. I want people to acknowledge that I am not just a tool; I have my own strength, too.”

Suga slowed to a stop, and Shōyō halted, too, when he noticed Suga was no longer beside him. He turned back, giving Suga a confused look. Suga stared back at him, his chest tight from more than just the run. Suga could relate to Shōyō’s feelings, to his desire not to be defined by the people around him.

“Me too,” Suga agreed. “I don’t want to be defined by those around me, I want to be the one on the court the longest. That’s why I will fight with my own style.”

Shōyō stared at him for a moment as the wind kicked up, blowing his red hair, and making it dance like firelight. His brown eyes gleamed in the late morning sun, a bittersweet understanding swirling in their depths, giving Suga the impression he’d missed something significant.

The look passed and Shōyō smiled wide at Suga. He grinned back, letting the strange moment go. Whatever it was, it wasn’t Suga’s place to press. Shō-kun would talk if there was something to tell him.

“C’mon, Shō-kun, let’s go or there won’t be lunch left for us.”

~O~

Kenma should have been surprised, but that would mean it would have been unexpected. Since first meeting the red haired first year from Karasuno, Kenma new something was off about him. So, it would be more appropriate to say he was intrigued.
Hinata Shōyō was a mystery. To most, the first impression was a short, lighthearted, and eager first year (well, once you learned he wasn’t an elementary school student). He was extremely friendly, drawing in even the most reluctant people. His personality had a gravity of its own; challenging and easy, so that you at once want to prove yourself while equally befriending him. Kenma knew this from personal experience, having run into him a few days prior after getting lost. It was a chance meeting, and though Kenma initially felt awkward (as with most first encounters with strangers), he also found himself charmed by his naivety and sincerity. Shōyō was unlike anyone Kenma had ever met before, and he, to his own astonishment, found he actually looked forward to playing against him when their teams met for their scheduled practice match. Kenma wasn’t disappointed.

Yet, it was more than just the opportunity to play against him. Kenma was not a stranger to combating new and interesting teams on the court. There was just something different about Shōyō, and he was beginning to draw a few conclusions why Shōyō felt so...different.

During that first meeting on some random street earlier in the week, Kenma noticed some—questionable—traits about his new acquaintance. They were subtle and most people would overlook them as quirks; the tilt of his head, or the way he moved. Just small, inconsequential actions that made Kenma imagine fluffy, ginger ears and a tail attached to the jolly first year. This wasn’t anything in and of itself strange, and it wouldn’t be the first time Kenma had compared a person to some animal. Hell, his best friend and the captain of Nekoma’s volleyball team, Kuroo Tetsurō, often resembled a predatory cat.

What was different in Shōyō’s case burned behind his amber gaze. There was intensity there that bespoke of something alive in a way that was beyond pure drive to succeed. It was if something existed alongside Shōyō, but was still simply him. Yet, it only lasted a mere moment before it was gone, and Kenma laughed at himself for his imagination. Too many nights playing RPGs.

Kenma left Shōyō that day, standing alone in the street and confused. Still, Kenma could not shake that he may have just witnessed something significant, and against all odds, he found himself anticipating the next time they met.

Now he was standing on the court across from Shōyō, the volleyball flying just past him, a blur of blue and yellow that he barely registered before the sound of it hitting the hardwood rang in his ears. Shōyō himself had been nothing more than an after image of ginger and black; one moment in the front of the rotation in the middle position, ready to leap for a spike, and the next, flying through the air on the right, impossibly high for his height.

“Nice, Shōyō. I’m...surprised,” Kenma admitted, stepping toward the net. The smaller first year chuckled lightly, embarrassed pride flushing his cheeks. Shōyō’s attention was diverted to his team as one of them called out approval, and Kenma observed him, his brain working overtime to puzzle out the strangeness of this boy who wasn’t all...boy.

By all rights, he shouldn’t have that much power. He was honestly too small for the position they placed him in, but Kenma could understand after seeing him leap. Yet, it wasn’t just Shōyō alone; he was wielded like a club and his handler was their setter. Strangely, as Kenma observed Karasuno’s offensive and defensive strategies, he noticed the same...oddness surrounding their number nine. He was way more intense than Shōyō, scarily so, and Kenma was reminded of Shōyō’s growl-y description of him. He had definitely been on target, but to Kenma, if Shōyō was like a Labrador, his setter was like a Pitbull. The two of them were disconcerting on their own, however, on the court they were nothing more than one more boss to beat, and Kenma would exploit their weakness.

When Nekomata called a time out, Kenma explained the plan he’d come up with, trapping Shōyō into hitting where they want by limiting his area of attack. “The more you fight a boss you can’t beat,
the more you get used to him,” he explained to Inuoka, their first year middle blocker he’d assigned to follow him. It worked, too, for a bit; Inuoka was catching up. Then number nine showed he was skilled in more than just setting. His ability to “thread the needle”, as the coach put it, was not limited to tossing.

Facing off against players with various skills on the court was not unusual, none of them would be where they were if they stayed within their comfort zone all of the time. The issue, for Kenma at least, was that both number nine and Shōyō were exceptional in a way that was almost supernatural. While their technique was sloppy, they had a synchronization—a connection—that was unusual for first years. Shōyō had even spiked the ball (twice) with his eyes closed, and though number nine was considered a genius and capable of precision tosses, the air between the two was different than it was with any of the other players.

And color Kenma actually mystified when their number eleven, a freakishly tall blonde with a permanently disgusted expression pasted to his face, executed a setter dump on Kenma; a complete replica of his own move less than ten minutes ago. Kenma would have been impressed by his cleverness had his uncanny gold eyes not fallen on him. Kenma didn’t like making eye contact as it was, but number eleven gave him the creeps. He had merely a second’s worth of contact, and the intelligence behind that impassively observant look was enough to make him quiver. Number eleven gave off the same...aura as Shōyō and number nine, and it was weird. They were the only members of Karasuno to feel that way, and it made Kenma as curious as he was troubled.

Their first match ended and led to several more, Karasuno never winning one game, but Kenma was never as bored by that fact as he would have been under normal circumstances. Between the three of them—the Labrador, the Pitbull, and now the Doberman—Kenma was sure, given some time, they’d be a force to reckon with. And not just on the court.

Later that evening he would recall all the oddness that surrounded the three first year players from the other team; the way numbers nine and eleven followed Shōyō with their eyes, or their subtle possessiveness of him while maintaining distance. The electricity between Shōyō and number nine (who he’d learn later was called Kageyama). The strained interactions between Kageyama and their number eleven.

That was maybe the most peculiar of the whole day; Kageyama and number eleven despised each other, no matter how they attempted to cover up their true feelings. When no one watched—no one but Kenma, that is—they stared each other down, posturing in ways that truly made Kenma think of beasts fighting over territory. It didn’t help observing them sniff the air repeatedly, or the flash of teeth he swore he saw but was afraid of mentioning in case his teammates, and Kuro, thought he was crazy.

Later that evening, when Kenma would be alone, playing his games, he’d remember all of this. He’d remember and his mind would drag up images of one particular game he played where fairytale creatures existed and hid their true selves with magic called glamours in order to live alongside humans in peace. He’d think of these things, and wonder, could it all be true.

Chapter End Notes

Next: (I think)

Hinata has a therapy appointment, Director Kida is really smart, and there’s probably
something else, but I can't think of it at the moment.

Comments/Kudos appreciated.
Chapter 12: Epiphanies

Chapter Notes

I'm back bitches! I actually like this chapter. But I hate the title. Anyhoo, enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

First Year, High School, Summer

Director Kida sat at his desk analyzing his latest findings. He’d built a working theory for the last couple of years, and he was surprised he’d not thought of it sooner. The Beta gene was identifiable, having been discovered years ago. With that being said, if there was a specific marker that identified an individual carrying the gene, shouldn’t there be a marker indicating the gene’s presentation?

It sounded easy enough—for a geneticist. However, the reality was the opposite. Even though Kida had been mapping each of his subjects chromosomes once a year since they’d been born, with no data to compare his results against, there was little information to go on. Actually, he literally had nothing to go on; no previous chromosomal data that would expose the mystery that would (or could) be the marker that ultimately revealed a Beta carrier’s gender prior to presentation. And despite evidence to the contrary, Kida refused to believe that evolution left this an eternal enigma.

Kida sighed, frustrated by the lack of technological advances and the lack of data that could help him. If he could find the marker, the possibilities of what he might be able to do—to create—were endless. Having access to the gene was one thing, but controlling the outcome...well, that was God-level ability.

Kida rubbed his tired eyes beneath his glasses. He spent so much time in his office it was obsessive. This project took all of his time and energy, not that he was complaining. The information on what they had now would be enough to shake the scientific community to its core. Humanity, as a whole, would be forced to reconsider their origins and who they were in the grand scheme. Knowing that there was something inhuman out there, something compatible with human genes...that knowledge could make or break humanity.

It all depended on how it was handled, and Director Kida planned to handle it carefully. With himself holding the reigns, of course. When his project finished, Kida would not only be a—very—wealthy man, but he’d be a very powerful one. He would not part with that future for his life.

But first...first he needed to identify the marker.

Director Kida stood up slowly, stretching limbs cramped from sitting too long in a limited space. His shoulder popped, a result of an injury sustained years ago during a very different experiment. He picked up his coffee mug, dregs of old coffee and cream sloshing along the bottom. A break to refill his cup would allow him a moment to wake up his tired brain. He checked his pockets for his cigarettes and lighter, thinking he’d step outside for a quick smoke as well.

Kida left his office as it was—low lighting, cluttered desk, and stinking of stale smoke—and headed out into the hall. He closed the door, hearing the click of the automatic lock, then ambled down to the
break room. Luckily, there was still warm coffee in the pot, though how old it actually was he decided was best left unknown. He filled his cup, added the powdered cream, then backtracked down the hall and passed his office. A few turns later and he took the stairs to a maintenance exit that led out onto the roof. He often came out there during his infrequent breaks in order to rejuvenate. That evening, the fresh air was warm with a hint of ozone and heavy with moisture, the tell tale sign of approaching rain. The full moon was hidden behind grey clouds giving the sky a false light. The rainy season was about to begin.

Director Kida walked over to the ledge, hiking one foot onto the low wall that ran the perimeter of the wing he was in. He set his his cup down, pulled out his pack of cigarettes, and pulled out a single stick. He stuffed the pack back in his shirt pocket and used his lighter to ignite the end, taking a long, slow drag of the harsh smoke. He exhaled, watching the grey cloud dissipate into the air around him. He let his thoughts wander with the smoke.

Three weeks ago, subject number one had arrived at the hospital seeking the finished suppressant. It hadn’t been generosity or a conscience that motivated the geneticist to create the medication. Despite the, honestly, cringe-worthy first heat subject one experienced, Kida was more interested in controlling outcomes rather than dispensing relief. Did he feel sorry for Hinata-kun? Sure. He wasn’t heartless. However, the subject’s comfort was less a concern than the events that followed a heat.

Still, the result of the subject’s arrival afforded him a rare, intimate view into an Omega’s cycle. He’d briefly considered the possibility of a rut suppressant, but decided against it when both Alphas reported managing their episodes on their own. Like the saying goes, ‘If it ain’t broke…’.

But creating an Omegan heat suppressant seemed necessary by comparison. Heat was apparently much more intense, as evidenced by subject one’s behavior the day he arrived at the hospital as instructed. The Director had not been present the first time, having been out of town appeasing the rest of the board with status updates. Unsurprisingly, Kida was astounded by the chart he’d been handed upon his return.

The MRI had shown remarkable differences in the activity of the subject’s brain compared to before presentation. That was to be expected; there were increases in areas of the brain that controlled emotional output, sensory development, reflexes, stress, and the pituitary gland. These changes were similar to Alpha presentation. However, blood tests revealed significant differences, such as a surge in progesterone, increasing estrogen levels. A new hormone was also identified, one the Director had dubbed, testerogen, since it appeared to release only during heat, counterbalancing the high levels of progesterone and nulling potential negative side effects.

However, he had not expected the outcome of the subject’s second heat. Director Kida has been watching over these children since their birth, one way or another. With adolescence and presentation of their new genders, the Director has been hyper vigilant, wanting to know as much as possible about the changes in each subject. Unfortunately, short of locking each one behind observation glass, there were bound to be effects that went unnoticed...or in this case, unreported. That was the downside of relying on subject disclosure, no one ever tells the complete truth. And the truth was, both Alphas had left out significant details about the physical changes.

Color everyone on staff beyond shocked the day Hinata-kun showed up for his meds. It wasn’t the perpetual hard on the poor boy sported that had everyone flipping their shit. No, it was the animalistic growling, the claws, and the fangs. It was the shift from human to something... more than human that had his staff running back to the data, combing over every detail and trying to figure out how they missed this.

Director Kida inhaled more of the biting smoke from his cigarette. He sighed, thick smoke pouring
from his nostrils, before spitting a piece of escaped tobacco from his mouth. He ran a hand through
his hair, the thought of that day sending shivers down his spine like it had every time he thought of it.

From the observation area, Kida had watched as the young man crawled out from the MRI and faced
them; his eyes swirled umber and so clear they appeared to nearly glow in the fluorescent lighting.
His usually smiling mouth was twisted in an ugly snarl, white pricks of elongated canines clashing
against red lips. Hinata stood there clawed fingers curled into tight fists at his sides, his body
trembling with barely suppressed rage or fear, it was hard to tell. Kida watched the boy, his eyes
taking in everything that had never been explored before he gave Isaki the go-ahead to lead the
young man to the room they’d readied for him.

He watched as the Omega sniffed about the room, pacing slowly, fidgeting nervously. Kida heard
the territorial growl that emanated from him when Isaki stepped into the room, watched as the
Omega curled into himself, a defensive maneuver, like a trapped animal. He watched as Uemura
leapt into action, taking control of a situation that was quickly spiraling, and somehow having a
calming effect on the subject.

It was...it had been...fascinating.

Among the many theories Kida had about the Beta gene, prominent among them was the physical
effects of an active gene. How it would manifest itself once presented. What they had learned up
until then was astounding in and of itself, but this...this had excited Kida.

There were stories, so many different legends and lore surrounding this mysterious lycanthropic
change, but always common among them was a strangeness in the eyes, the fangs, the claws, and the
animalistic sounds. Most of the stories characterized the changes as dangerous, as man devolving into
beast, and to be honest, a part of Kida had been fearful. But it was also beautiful. Kida had been
present and witness to the transcendence of man, and it was nearly a religious awakening for him.

A gust of hot, muggy air blew past Kida, buffeting him where he stood on the roof of the hospital.
He blinked, suddenly brought out of his thoughts and back to the here and now. Glancing down
at his cigarette, Kida sighed and flicked away the filter, the tobacco having burnt out long ago.

Sighing, Kida picked up his lukewarm drink. He sipped at the coffee as he turned to head back
inside the building. It wasn’t long before he was punching in the code to his office and slipping
inside. The door shut behind him with an electronic click, and Kida returned to his desk. He stood
before his chair, staring down at the chaos of paperwork, formulas, and other data. Impulsively, Kida
set his cup down and went about organizing the mess that was his desk. He stacked loose sheets of
paper in piles according to their classification, deciding to worry about dating them later, when he
had more time.

Eventually he reached the bottom and stopped, his dark and tired eyes locking onto an old print out
of subject one’s chromosomal makeup. He’d seen this map hundreds of times—maybe thousands—
over the last fifteen years. However, something was different; he could feel it in his bones.

Kida set aside the handful of data he was holding, then sat down in his chair, his eyes never straying
from that print out. Something was there, he knew it, but it evaded him like the shadows one sees
from the corner of the eye.

Suddenly, Kida’s eyes widened, and his hand shook as he lifted the sheet and brought it closer to his
face. His nose brushed against the grain of the paperwork and he sneezed before slamming it to the
table top and spinning around to face his computer. Kida logged in to his desktop and opened subject
one’s file. He scrolled through folders and spreadsheets and informational notes until he found the
specific document he needed, clicking on the icon.
Once opened, Kida scrolled right through the extraneous information until he reached a pictorial description of subject one’s very first chromosomal mapping. Kida maneuvered the mouse to the zoom icon and increased the magnification, centering the picture on the first pair of autosomes.

There! On the second strand of the first pair—a tiny tic. A mere...bump.

Kida scrolled to the next pair, his eyes taking over the strands slowly.

There! On the first strand.

The next pair...the first strand...

The fourth pair...the second strand...

On and on, the tic manifested on each pair, sometimes on the first strand and at others, on the second, all the way until the end. Kida clicked back to his desktop and opened subject two’s file. Same result, a small abnormality that was easy to overlook—for fifteen years.

Two hours later and Kida had combed through each subject’s files. All three had the same abnormality attached to at least one autosome in each pair with one major difference.

Kida snatched up the phone, quickly punching in a number. One of his legs bounced as he waited through the incessant ringing for the line to click. The second the other line connected he shouted into the phone, “Uemura!”

On the other end of the line, Dr. Uemura’s sleep laced voice replied, “Director,” a pause as he yawned, “What time is it?”

Impatient, Kida snapped, “I don’t know, sometime after two, who cares! I need you to come in now!”

Uemura sighed, “Can it really not wait until a more reasonable time? Say, eight-ish?”

“I found it.” Kida held his breath, his fingers drumming a chaotic beat atop his desk as he waited for the doctor to catch up.

“Found…” Kida could hear rustling in the background, like Uemura was finally rising from his bed. When he spoke again, the tone of his voice said he was wide awake.

“You figured it out?!”

Kida chuckled, the sound both manic from lack of sleep, and overjoyed, “Yeah. You need to see this.”

“Give me fifteen minutes,” Dr. Uemura answered, excitement in his tone.

~O~

Shōyō fidgeted, nervous fingers pulling and picking at each other in his lap, his leg bouncing rapidly as he sat in one of the uncomfortable hospital chairs in Dr. Junko’s borrowed office. This was his first counseling appointment, scheduled the day he was discharged after showing up and demanding his dose of medication.
Honestly, Shōyō wasn’t exactly sure why he was there to begin with. The medication had done its job, stifling the majority of his episode’s symptoms, and he’d survived. Physically, at least. Emotionally was a whole different issue, so why did they think he needed to talk about something he’d rather forget?

It was hard enough returning to practice, not to mention facing Tsukishima.

Shōyō darted a glance in Dr. Junko’s direction, catching her eye briefly. She smiled at him in a kind but distant way, and he quickly looked away again.

“What has you so nervous?”

Shōyō avoided looking at her, letting his eyes fall to his lap. He shrugged, unable to open his mouth to say anything for fear of what may come pouring out. He would rather not humiliate himself any further.

“It’s okay, Shōyō,” Dr. Junko gently encouraged, “we don’t have to talk about anything you’re uncomfortable with.”

Shōyō couldn’t help but look at her, then, hesitant and still uncertain.

“Remember, we talked about this. Doctor-patient privilege,” she encourage, gesturing between the two of them. “Nothing discussed here will leave this room.” She smiled at him again.

Shōyō nodded, worrying his bottom lip a bit. He cleared his throat, “Nothing?”

“Nothing that isn’t medically relevant, no.”

Shōyō nodded again, glancing at the bare wall. He sighed. It wasn’t as if he didn’t have things to talk about. Frankly, it would be nice to vent some of his frustrations and fears. The problem, however, lies in the fact that he is a young, Japanese male, and some of his...concerns would mark him as troublesome or deviant; things that could make people wary of him. Truthfully he was surprised no one had taken more severe action (i.e., kick him off the team) after the last incident.

He shuddered at the smallest thought of it, stomping those images back down into the darkness where they belong.

Steeling his nerves with a deep breath, Shōyō tentatively began, “Okay.” He paused for a heartbeat, closing his eyes and taking a couple more breaths. “I may or may not be...” Shōyō paused again, darting a fearful look toward the doctor, then ducking his head in shame, “attracted to two of my teammates.” Shōyō clamped his mouth shut, feeling oddly relieved to get that much out, and terrified of the doctor’s reaction.

“Okay.”

Shōyō tensed, not sure how to comprehend such a concise, nonjudgmental statement. He met and locked eyes with Dr. Junko. She watched him, expression soft, yet carefully blank.

“Would you care to discuss these feelings?”

Shōyō really had not been expecting this conversation to go as easily as it was. With his confession he had expected disappointment, maybe a lecture of why his feelings were wrong, or some diagnosis stating he was sick in the head. Still, he couldn’t help the sudden relief he felt as the doctor waited patiently for him to continue.
“Let’s start with defining your attraction, okay?” She prompted.

Shōyō furrowed his brow in confusion, “Define?”

Dr. Junko nodded, “Yes, would you describe your feelings as emotional or physical?”

Shōyō looked back at his hands in his lap, and took a deep breath. He tried to think back on everything that had happened and how it has affected him. It wasn’t easy, he’d spent much of the time attempting to repress as much of his feelings about it all as he could.

“I don’t know,” he finally answered, genuinely confused about his feelings. He looked back up at the doctor, his expression sheepish since he couldn’t give her a more definitive reply.

“That’s okay, Shōyō-kun,” she gently validated, “you don’t have to know it all right now. We can start simply by helping you identify the feelings you can understand.”

A small smile broke out over Shōyō’s face, barely tilting the corners of his lips, and a light flush brightened his cheeks as he nodded his compliance. “Okay.”

“Well then, let’s start at the beginning, okay? When was the first time you noticed these feelings?”

Again, Shōyō lost himself to the recent past. “And Shōyō,” Dr. Junko interrupted his thoughts and Shōyō focused on her, “No incident is too small. It could be anything, okay?” Shōyō nodded at her and tried to think.

It took a few moments but he was pretty sure he figured out the exact moment he knew things changed for him. “I think,” he began, “I think it was the first time I hit one of Kageyama’s tosses.”

“And Kageyama is one of the two boys on your team who are causing these feelings?” The doctor clarified.

Shōyō nodded, “Yeah.”

“Okay, this is a good start. Why don’t you tell me what happened.”

Shōyō sighed and settled back in his seat, trying to get comfortable as he thought back to that day. “Um, well, it was the first week of school and we were practicing for a three-on-three that weekend. Kageyama was being a jerk—as usual—and wouldn’t toss to me know matter how much I begged him to.”

Shōyō looked back at the doctor to make sure she was following along. “You know what I mean by tossing, right? It’s when the ball is received to the setter,” Shōyō put his hands up in his best approximation of a setter’s form, getting really excited that he was talking about his favorite subject, “and hits the ball to the spiker (me), and I hit it over the net while trying to avoid the blockers (also me when I block) on the other side of the net. It’s really a technical move, and Kageyama has to know where I need to be so I can spike it…”

“Shōyō,” He paused, glancing at the doctor with his head tilted, “I am sure that your sport requires a lot of skill,” she said, smiling at his enthusiasm, “however, as fascinating as your explanation is, I am not sure the technicalities of volleyball are really important to the topic. Let’s stay on track, okay?”

“Oh,” he replied, sort of disappointed, “right.” It’s sometimes easy to forget that not everyone enjoys volleyball as much as he does. “So, yeah, like I said, he was being a jerk. He told me he wouldn’t toss to me because I wasn’t,” and here Shōyō put his hands on his head, flattening his hair, doing his best to impersonate his grumpy teammate, “‘Essential to winning’. Can you believe him?! He’s so
rude! I worked really hard all last year so I could be good enough and he’s always telling me I suck.” Shōyō’s expression dropped into a pout as his hands fell back into his lap, “Sometimes I just want to,” he curled his fingers in front of his face as if imagining he was choking Kageyama, “Gahghh!”

Dr. Junko chuckled, “Sometimes the people we most rely on drive us the most crazy.”

Shōyō blinked at her, his eyes widening before falling into something more soft. “Yeah,” he replied, his cheeks flushing a soft pink, “yeah, I can see that.” His hands fell back to his lap again and he smiled softly down at them, “When he tossed to me it was like I won something. Like he was finally acknowledging me as important.” Shōyō chuckled to himself, “Then he told me that ‘we’ would win that weekend. He said ‘we’, as if we were actual teammates. It was then, I think, that moment. I don’t think I recognized it then. But now, looking back at that day, I think he became more to me than just my teammate.” Shōyō looked back at the doctor smiling, feeling so much better now that he’d been able to establish a time frame of when it all started for him.

Dr. Junko nodded at him, smiling, then turned her attention to her notepad and started writing down something.

“Also, I threw up right after it all happened, so I don’t think I had time to really think about my feelings.”

Dr. Junko stiffened and looked at him from beneath short, dark lashes, then shook her head laughing quietly. “You’re honestly a joy to have around, Shōyō.”

“You don’t think I’m weird?” Shōyō asked, a bit bemused by her statement.

“Why would I think that?” The doctor asked, her expression wrinkling in confusion.

“Be-because I’m...I’m attracted to…” Shōyō couldn’t finish the sentence, his sexuality had never been something he’d thought deeply about. Frankly, he’d been too busy in middle school to have crushes, and girls were just icky in elementary. However, he had always assumed he was...you know...not...

“211 million people world wide consider themselves part of the LGBT community, and 7.6 percent of Japan’s population is part of that. Why would you be weird when so many people out there don’t consider themselves singularly straight?”

“I don’t know what I am,” Shōyō replied, frowning down at the floor. Dr. Junko sighed.

“Shōyō, no one says you have to know or define it at all if you don’t want to.”

Shōyō’s vision blurred as tears gathered in his eyes. It was a relief to hear that he didn’t have to say it, he still wasn’t sure if that’s how he wanted to be defined, anyway. He sniffed and rubbed his nose on the back of his hand. “Thanks,” he whispered, his voice watery.

“No thanks necessary, Shōyō-kun.” Shōyō looked up as the doctor smiled kindly at him. He smiled back, though not as blindingly as he might have under different circumstances.

“Now tell me about the second boy.”

The smile immediately dropped from Shōyō’s face and he groaned, rubbing one hand down his face. “I don’t even know. I mean, at least Kageyama and me have our love of volleyball. But Tsukishima is just a straight up bastard. I can’t even begin to understand why I’m attracted to him except that he smells phenomenal.”
“Is it his cologne?”

“Cologne? Uh, no...he just smells...good. So does Kageyama, for that matter.”

“Could you describe it?” The doctor asked, looking thoroughly confused.

Shōyō blushed, his cheeks, nose, and ears competing with the color of his hair. He’s never had to describe their scents before; hell, he’s only ever really talked about it with Kageyama that one time. He knows he shouldn’t be embarrassed but it just feels weird talking about something that feels...oddly intimate to him.

“Um, well, I guess Tsukishima smells like...lemons? I don’t know, it reminds me of when my sister and I eat chilled lemons in the summer when it’s really hot.”

“Hmm.” The doctor’s eyes bore into him, making Shōyō squirm under their scrutiny. “And Kageyama smells the same?”

“Oh, no, he is more like when it rains in the forest behind my home in the spring.”

“Hm,” the doctor vaguely replied. She stared at him, causing Shōyō to shift slightly, uncomfortable under her calculating gaze, then suddenly broke eye contact to scribble on her notepad. Shōyō was severely curious about what she was writing on the yellow legal pad.

“How do I smell, Shōyō?” Dr. Junko hadn’t even looked up at him, choosing to continue to write instead.

Shōyō swallowed, antsy and feeling as if he’d just made a huge mistake. “Um, well, I suppose just...normal...?” He hadn’t wanted to frame his answer in such a way, as if he needed approval. Yet, he couldn’t help it, his vocabulary was lacking enough that he couldn’t find a more helpful word, and her sudden subtle change in body language was making him nervous.

Dr. Junko looked up at him, her face contorted in puzzlement, “Normal?”

Shōyō shrugged, “Yeah, I mean you have a slightly...I don’t know...what’s the word for...um...I guess personal?”

The doctor shook her head, “I’ll need context...individual, maybe?”

Shōyō bobbed his head in swift movements, agreeing with the doctor, “Yeah, you have an individual smell, but it’s really light, not like Kageyama or Tsukishima.”

Dr. Junko nodded again, “Okay, I carry a scent. Does anyone else?”

If the doctor was surprised by this, Shōyō couldn’t tell, she held up her mask of professional distance really well.

“Yeah, well everyone does. It’s all pretty much the same, light...kinda...bland, but I know it’s you.”

“Everyone?” Dr. Junko’s mask slipped a little, her eyes widening almost imperceptibly.

“Uh huh.”

“So we each have our own distinctive scent?” She clarified, her voice trembling faintly with excitement. Shōyō wondered what there was to be so happy about. Since he’d began noticing all the different smells and odors in the world—noticing more than most people he was sure, with the exception of Kageyama and Tsukishima—his nose had been stuffy more often than not. It was
honestly kind of annoying.

“Yeah, except Kageyama and Tsukishima’s are really…” he was struggling to find a correct word.

“Different?” Dr. Junko supplied.

Shōyō shook his head slowly, his face scrunching in agitation, “Louder.” It was the best he could do.

“Ahh...so those two have the distinctive scents.”

“Yeah, I guess.”

“And they smell good.”

Shōyō blushed, ducking his head. “Yeah,” he replied, a little breathless.

“Okay, this is good, Shōyō.” She smiled at him, a little more genuine than usual. Shōyō smiled back but it felt forced. He didn’t know why it bothered him that she could be so worked up over something like the way everyone smelled to him.

“Now, tell me why you think Tsukishima smells good.”

Shōyō blinked at her, “I told you, he smells kinda citrus-y, and it sorta makes me think of summer. Though, something that happy doesn’t really match his crappy personality.”

“But he still smells...attractive, for lack of a better word.”

“Yeah.”

“What does his scent say to you?” Dr. Junko prompted. Shōyō tilted his head, unsure what she meant.

“I mean,” she waved her hand as she considered how to phrase her question. “Okay, so scent is one of our strongest sense stimulators. For instance, Tsukishima reminds you of fond memories between you and your sister, right?”

Shōyō nodded.

“Well, scent can also trigger emotions, such as the ‘fondness’ you feel toward your sister. Are you following me so far?”

Shōyō nodded again, “I think so.”

“Good. So, in this case, while Tsukishima may not appeal to you as a person, his scent has triggered emotions you would never give thought to normally; mainly attraction.”

Shōyō nodded once more.

“What does that attraction mean to you?”

“Oh. Okay. Um...” Shōyō stops to scrutinize his, admittedly, weird feelings toward the jerk. “I guess,” he begins again, slowly, “he makes me feel...safe?”

“Safe?”

“Uh, yeah, like, I feel protected.” That confession was as surprising to Shōyō as it was fascinating to
the doctor, who returned to furiously write on her notepad.

“So in essence, Kageyama makes you feel needed and Tsukishima makes you feel protected.”

“I...guess?”

Dr. Junko chuckled, “It’s okay, Shōyō. We’re just beginning and these definitions could change as you become more aware of how you feel about your two teammates.”

Shōyō sighed, his muscles relaxing though he never noticed how he’d tensed up during their conversation. It was a consolation to know that his feelings were not locked down to feeling ‘needed’ and ‘protected’; two emotions seriously at odds with the personalities of the two boys they were tied to. Like, come on, with the way Bakeyama and Stingyshima consistently and negatively treated him, how could he actually feel that way toward either?

Yet, on some level, Shōyō knew it was true. Despite their nasty attitudes, somehow, Kageyama made Shōyō feel important to him, and Tsukishima made him feel secure.

“Okay,” Dr. Junko stated, setting aside her notepad and gazing at the clock, “I think we’re safe to stop here until our next session. Let’s meet back in a week, how does that sound?”

Inwardly, Shōyō cringed. While he did feel better having gotten some of his concerns off his chest, he wasn’t sure he wanted to continue unpacking feelings he’d really rather ignore. However, he sighed and smiled, agreeing to see the doctor in a week. Shōyō knew his mother would never let him stop going. Not since she learned they had offered him free counseling after everything that had happened (his mother did not know the details of the last incident, only that the symptoms had sprung up on him and he’d gone to retrieve his medication).

Shōyō left the hospital that afternoon feeling very conflicted and gripping an new appointment card.

~O~

Patient number: 1  Current date: 05/09/20-
Born: Hinata Shōyō
Father: Deceased
Mother: Hinata Yumiko, subBeta, has been monitored.
Siblings: Hinata Natsu, non-carrier
DOB: 06/21/20-
Current Length: 162.8 cm
Current Weight: 51.9 kg
Notes: Patient arrived for session on time and dressed appropriately for weather in track shorts and t-shirt. Clothes were well maintained, and patient was clean with no odor. Orientation x3. Patient appeared nervous, not making eye contact at first, but slowly warmed up as the session continued. Doctor reassured patient, reminding him of confidentiality. Patient began session disclosing feelings of “attraction” toward patients 2 and 3. Doctor used open ended questions, prompting patient to explore his attraction. Patient eventually identified feeling “needed” and “protected” by patients 2 and 3.

Patient also disclosed identifying distinctive scents on patients 2 and 3. He reported that patient 2
smells like “chilled lemons I eat in the summer”, and patient 3 smells like “spring rain in the forest behind my home”. He also reported that most people have an individual scent, though it is considerably more “bland” than patients 2 and 3.

It appears that pheromone production does, in fact, aid in the attraction of a mate. However, it seems as though Patient 1 has taken a liking to both scents given off by patients 1 and 2. Though known records indicate Alphas and Omegas coupling, Doctor would be interested in knowing the possibility of polyamorous relationships within groups lacking appropriate numbers.

Conclusion: Doctor will continue to explore patient’s growing interest in both Alphas and how scent affects choice. Doctor will explore effects of attraction on patient’s self-identity.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter:
-Hopefully some development between Kageyama and Hinata (assuming the story actually does what I want it to).
-Plot development? courtesy of Tsukki. Maybe. Cross your fingers.

As always, smack that Kudos button like you want your daddy to smack that ass. Or comment. Either one will do. Please. It really does help with the motivation.

BIMB :)
Chapter 13: In Which Tobio Has Feelings

Chapter Summary

Tobio and Hinata spend some quality time together.

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the long wait. I hit a major road block in the story and the chapter went through, like, four rewrites before I finally found the groove. This story has been kicking my ass. Every time I think I'm on a roll, I'm hit with writer's block and it takes so much to push through. Thanks for all of you who have stuck by it so far. I was hoping to get into the meat of the story by now, but these things often have a mind of their own. Anyway, I don't foresee the next chapter taking as long, but we all know how my promises go. Happy reading!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

High School, First Year, Summer

*Hubris (n): excessive pride or self-confidence.*

It’s a word Tobio recently learned as part of his vocabulary studies. That and *irony*.

How apt that those two words swim to the surface of his conscience as he’s headed home with his team after losing to his former senpai.

They had been—*he* had been—so sure of victory, that with this new team, and Hinata as his greatest weapon, he would take the preliminary tournament by storm. They had worked *so hard*. He had craved victory over Oikawa, to prove himself the stronger setter, but all he had accomplished that day was to embarrass himself and fail Hinata.

He sighed and turned his head to watch the sleeping figure of his partner as Hinata’s frustrated words echoed in his head.

*Don’t make it sound like you shouldn’t have tossed to me!*

He never meant it that way. His apology.

Tobio’s eyes roamed Hinata’s sleeping face. His expression was relaxed, so different from earlier when he yelled at Tobio or sobbed during dinner. His forehead was smooth, their loss forgotten beneath the weight of exhaustion. His thick lashes fanned out over plump cheeks always dusted a light shade of pink. His mouth hung open, drool slipping down the side of his cheek as he lightly snored away. He looked so ridiculous he was almost adorable.
Tobio lifted a hand, the back of his knuckles just barely grazing Hinata’s cheek before he hesitated and changed direction, patting Hinata’s fluffy red hair instead. Hinata snorted and shifted his weight, getting comfortable again, his respirations evening out once he was comfortable.

Tobio leaned back against the bus seat, staring up at the ceiling, and sighed. In the two plus months he’d known Hinata, the short gremlin has managed to weasel his way into Tobio’s life until he could barely remember what it was like to set a game without him. It’s absurd, if you think about it, to be so synchronized with someone in so short a time. But that’s how it was with them. Tobio felt like everything he’s done, every game he’s played, had led him here, to Hinata.

It was his job to pave the way for Hinata to strike against their opponents, and succeed. He was only useful to Hinata as long as he could accomplish that one thing, and he had failed him spectacularly with the preliminary loss. Yes, Tobio felt like he let his whole team down, but it’s against Hinata he felt the sting of regret the most.

The partnership he’d cultivated (or been dragged into, depending on you point of view) had quickly become the most important relationship he’s ever known. Before Hinata, Tobio was a freak and always alone. He may still be a freak, but he wasn’t alone anymore. He’s found someone, and not just someone who could keep pace with him on the court, but someone who understood him. Hinata continued to grow into someone Tobio trusted, and not only that, but also someone he cared for.

And that in itself was another problem. Tobio cared.

Hinata was ceasing to be just a teammate. He was moving beyond a friend. Tobio was finding himself sinking deeper and deeper into a bog of feelings the more exposure he had to the little twit.

Hinata’s enthusiasm, his drive to grow (as a player, he would never get any taller no matter what new fad he found on the internet), the way he seemed to Goku his way into everyone’s life, making friends of every rival. He was the sun, and like flowers, everyone they met turned to bask in his warmth. That included Tobio—especially Tobio.

Hinata shifted next to him again, his head dropping until Tobio felt the weight of it on his shoulder. He tensed for a brief second before relaxing as Hinata’s heat seeped through his clothes and into his skin at the point of contact. With the movement came a fresh burst of spring flowers and cut grass, and Tobio inhaled the scent, saturating his olfactory senses in a perfume that both fed his growing desire and felt like coming home.

Yet, beneath the sweet smell lingered a subtle sourness, like those same flowers wilting in the sun. Over the days he’d known and spent time with Hinata, Tobio was beginning to learn the changes in scent that wafted off him. Despite the fact the idiot was an open book of feelings, Tobio still lacked finesse at reading him—big thank you to social awkwardness. It wasn’t hard to determine that emotional output influenced pheromone changes, still Tobio had some difficulty understanding nuances. He was getting better however, and the slight sourness of Hinata’s scent was definitely related to his feelings toward their defeat.

Tobio wrinkled his nose. It wasn’t because the smell was bad, per se, it was mostly that the scent threw his protectiveness into overdrive. Hinata’s discomfort had a way of increasing Tobio’s stress, so it was in his best interest to keep him calm and content.

In response to Hinata’s tainted scent, Tobio felt the automatic release of pheromones, soothing Hinata in his sleep. He turned to watch as the smaller boy still sleeping away at his shoulder twitched, then sighed, rubbing his cheek against Tobio like a cat rubbed against your hand. Tobio snickered, shaking his head, then leaned back and closed his eyes. Hinata’s scent settled, the undercurrent of sourness ebbing away.
Tobio couldn’t change the events of that day, but he could work harder at becoming better in the future. As for now, if enveloping Hinata in a blanket of calming scent was all he could do, then that’s what Tobio would give him.

For now.

~8~

Despite the devastating loss the team faced, the following afternoon practice, everyone showed up, including the adults. Even that lanky bastard managed to make an appearance. No one had to say anything, at that point they were all of one mind, determined to do whatever was needed to make sure they never felt the sting of defeat again.

The moment practice started, the loss against Seijoh was put behind them, each member of the team focused on the future and what they could do to help improve their chances in the fall. Excitement slowly started filtering through the gym until it felt like just another practice, albeit with an air of anticipation hanging on the atmosphere instead of disappointment. They would take their defeat and learn from it.

Hinata, especially, dug in his heels, gritting his teeth as he strived for more height in his jumps and more speed in his run-ups. He even stopped complaining about practicing receives, though he improved only marginally.

Tobio couldn’t help but feel warmth in his chest as he worked alongside his partner, his infectious excitement spilling onto the rest of the team. Of course Tobio never let his growing fondness show, making sure to squeeze the idiot’s head whenever he was being especially idiotic. Which was a lot.

And when practice ended, the duo resumed their after-practice practice, getting in one more hour while Tanaka, who had been charged with babysitting, grumbled by the door. After they tired themselves out, all three headed out for meat buns courtesy of their favorite Senpai (depending on who was doing the buying).

Tanaka left them not long after, Tobio and Hinata walking quietly beside each other, the only sound being the crunch of their shoes on asphalt, the rasp of Hinata’s bike wheels, and the crickets singing in the dusky evening.

“Hey, you wanna hang out this weekend?”

Tobio swallowed the last of his meat bun, turning wide-eyes to Hinata who straddled his bike seat, pulling himself along with his feet as he leaned on the handle bars. He’d inhaled his meat bun almost as soon as he got it, though Tobio wasn’t far behind. Hinata stared straight ahead, pursing his lips while making annoying noises. He turned to Tobio expectantly and with a questioning look when he saw his surprised expression.

“What?”

Tobio wasn’t sure what to say, it had been a long time since anyone had asked to spend time with him without volleyball as a buffer.

Tobio blinked rapidly, “S-sure…?” Of course he wanted to, excluding whatever weird feelings were lurking within him, Tobio wanted a friend, and Hinata was the closest to one he’d made in years.
However, socializing wasn’t his strong suit, people made him nervous.

“Well I’m not gonna force you, Bakeyama! Geez.”

“What?” Tobio asked, a little confused by Hinata’s offense.

“You don’t sound too thrilled,” Hinata pouted.

“No! Of course I want—“ Tobio started then balked at his own outburst, shoving his hands in his pockets, not knowing what else to do with them, and stared at the ground. He hoped the growing darkness hid his blush. “I mean, y-yeah. That’s cool.”

Hinata snorted, “You act like no one’s ever asked you to hang out.”

Tobio quickly glanced at him, then stared straight ahead, shrugging his shoulders.

“Oh,” Hinata mumbled, awkwardness filling the space between them, “Sorry.”

“It’s not like I haven’t before, it’s just been... awhile.” Tobio sighed, feeling embarrassed about disclosing such a lame fact about himself.

“Well their loss, right?”

When Tobio looked at Hinata the dumbass was grinning back at him. He allowed himself a small smile in return.

“Yeah, right.”

~8~

The weekend rolled around, and after practice on Saturday afternoon, Tobio and Hinata made their way to one of the local parks. Of course Hinata’s idea of hanging out included more practice, but Tobio wasn’t complaining.

There wasn’t an outdoor court nearby so the settled on receive practice, or more realistically Hinata’s receive practice. They chose a spot away from the small children and playground equipment, an area with a smattering of grass and no trees in close proximity.

Tobio plucked at his shirt, the early summer heat promising torturing temps all season long. Sweat rolled down his back as he spiked another ball in Hinata’s direction. They’d been at it for an hour already and Hinata’s success ratio was about three to one in favor of loss. It was better than a month ago, but he still needed so much improvement.

“Will you focus, dumbass!” Tobio growled at him as another receive went wayward.

“I am, Bakayama! I’m hot!”

Tobio rolled his eyes, and in his frustration spiked the ball a little too harshly.

Hinata barely caught it, receiving the ball at an awkward angle. Despite it, the ball came flying back toward Tobio, just off center. Tobio was impressed, launching himself into the path of the ball to spike it back just as hard, this time on purpose.
Hinata caught it again, his arms blossoming bright red, and he glared at Tobio from across the distance at he shook out his arms.

“Why the hell are you trying to kill me?!” He yelled as he geared up to receive another incoming missile.

“Why the hell are you not good enough?!” Tobio retorted as he slapped the ball back with even greater force.

Hinata’s eyes went dark with anger and determination. The scent wafting off of him of sweat and spring flowers grew stronger, dominating the air to the point Tobio was sure even the strangers nearby could smell it. It filled Tobio’s nose, and he automatically responded by breathing deep, his body reacting in arousal as he started to stiffen in his shorts.

The way twit overwhelmed the playground with his sweet scent reminded Tobio of when he and Tsukishima battled for dominance. Oddly, it made Tobio want to put Hinata in his place as well as pin him beneath him and show the fiery ginger who’s boss.

Who knew that an assertive Hinata was one of Tobio’s kinks?

“Kageyama!”

Tobio was jerked back to the present by the sound of his name, his focus coming back to him just a few moments too late as the ball smacked him in the face, sending him to his ass, arms windmilling wildly.

Silence descended on the small piece of earth he and Hinata’s had claimed for practice while Tobio rubbed at sore nose. The impact hadn’t been hard enough to make him bleed but it had fucking smarted.

In seconds a shadow loomed over him, and he leaned back glaring at a wide-eyed and horrified Hinata.

“I’m sooo sorry,” Hinata whispered hoarsely, hands hovering in the air around him nervously, “Please don’t kill me.”

Tobio moved to stand up, knocking away Hinata’s helping hand, and ignoring the weird squeak that came from him. Dusting himself off and wiggling his nose to test the extent of the pain (which was a lot, but not enough to worry him), Tobio glared down at Hinata again.

“If you tell anyone else about this, I will end you.”

A whine and the sour smell of dead flowers permeated the air between them, and Tobio had a brief surge of guilt rise. He didn’t want to distress Hinata, but he was irritated and struggling with his conscience.

He doesn’t get a chance to process his feelings or Hinata’s before a group of smallish humans surrounded them. Tobio froze, unsure how to react and feeling paranoid that they could smell Hinata and would blame him. Yet, the moment Hinata noticed the children, his scent changed, mellowing out and becoming something warm and comforting. He straightened up, smiling at them all with that one hundred watt grin. The children responded to him like chicks to a mother hen, chirping loudly and all at once with bright eyes and giddy smiles of their own.

Tobio was floored. Having been an only child all his life with just a handful of cousins, all of which are older than him, he had no idea how to respond to being accosted by pint-sized people.
Hinata, on the other hand, had no problem interacting.

“Hello!” He boomed, whatever fear he had a moment earlier completely erased by a half dozen snotty faces. “What can I do for ya?”

The chorus of squealing voices rescinded as one kid, a boy smaller than the rest but no less assertive, took the lead, addressing Hinata in an excited voice, “Big brother, can you play with us? We want to learn how to play volleyball, too!”

Tobio stared at them, head swiveling between Hinata and the group of children, still frozen on the same spot. They kids were totally fixated on Hinata, he could have been a celebrity the way these kids stared at him with adoration.

One or two noticed Tobio, glancing at him before looking away quickly. One leaned close to the leader, and in a loud whisper, asked, “Who’s the creeper?”

Tobio balked at that at the same time Hinata started giggling.

“What?! You little brat, I’m not a—“

“Kageyama!” Hinata broke in suddenly, glaring at him. “We do not yell at children!” He turned toward him, arms crossed over his chest, as the group of kids huddled behind him with wide eyed wariness.

Tobio stared at the perturbed look on his face, flinching back because he felt like a little boy being scolded by his mother. He looked from Hinata to the kids and back, completely dumbstruck. In all the bickering that happened between him and Hinata, this was the first time Tobio felt like a regular whipped pup.

“Sorry,” he mumbled (to the kids, not Hinata), bowing his head in shame, and feeling mortified for being so easily cowed by a group of people so much tinier than him.

Hinata appeared to accept his apology, though as he turned back to the children, Tobio was sure he caught the tail end of a smirk on his shitty face. Tobio mentally cursed him and swore to make him pay later.

“Anyway, we’d love to teach you, wouldn’t we, Bakeyama?”

Tobio stood outside the little group watching the excitement spread among them. Hinata glances back over his shoulder, his eyes alight with eagerness and mischief, knowing how uncomfortable and awkward Kageyama would be. So, of course, in his ever eloquent way, grunted his reply.

“Do we have to play with the creeper?” One of the kids asked. Tobio glared at her and tried not to pout.

“Oi, he’s not so bad. He looks mean but he’s just shy, so try and be nice to him, okay? He’s pretty okay once you get to know him.”

Tobio stared, open-mouthed. Since he’d known Hinata, he’s only ever said nice things about him in relation to volleyball. It was cool, then, filling him with a sense of pride and warmth Tobio had only ever felt the few times his former senpai, Iwaizumi-san, complimented him.

But this, these new compliments filled him with a whole new warmth; one he felt start at the core of his body, rolling over him and making his fingers and toes tingle. He could feel the blush spreading, first his ears, then over his nose and cheeks.
Hinata, because he’s a dick and sadist, giggled as he led the group of children to a bigger clearing like a sheepdog herding star-struck sheep (because who wouldn’t be captivated by his bright smile, and Jesus, Tobio, get ahold of yourself), tossing over his shoulder in a light-hearted, lilting voice, “Didn’t know you could blush, Bakeyama. Looks good on you.”

Tobio wanted to weep with mortification as his blush deepened to crimson and bled from his cheeks to cover the rest of his face and down his neck.

“No it doesn’t, boke!” He yelled back, trying to recapture the normal violence of his tone, but his embarrassment was too much, and Hinata’s responding grin just made it worse.

Kageyama sighed and followed, resigned to babysitting a bunch of strangers’ children. He kept to the periphery, watching as Hinata proceeded to teach the kids basic forms. Of course, because he was so bad at it, the forms were all off.

“Oi, dumbass, you’re doing it wrong!” Tobio snapped, still hanging around the edge of the group, but unable to stand back and let Hinata ruin potential future players. “Put your weight on the balls of your feet, spread your legs, use your whole body!” He punctuated each point with a demonstration, moving slowly or putting emphasis in specific movements.

The children watched him with interest, some nervously copying his movements. Tobio, getting swept away in the moment, stepped forward toward one kid that was not quite getting it. The child’s eyes went impossibly wide with terror and he made some choked noise before darting behind Hinata, clinging to his shirt as if he could protect him.

“Bakeyama, try not to glare at the children, would you?”

Tobio has not been glaring. It wasn’t his fault his face fell naturally like that. He’d only been concentrating, but now he did glare, at Hinata. He tried not to pout as Hinata turned back to teaching the kids using the tips Tobio suggested, he noticed.

It was boring for the first fifteen minutes as he just stood there in the heat of the afternoon observing Hinata dart back and forth between kids, adjusting stances, repeating actions, or gently spiking the ball. They took turns receiving, each chubby face grinning widely, eyes burning bright like fire, eagerly drinking in words of praise and encouragement that fell easily from Hinata’s lips.

But, Tobio slowly started growing in awe as he watched, unable to stave off feeling impressed, and a little jealous, at the ease with which Hinata made friends. It was one thing with rival teams, an irritating quirk that followed him everywhere. However, it was just short of infuriating to see with small children. Why? Because it was bad enough to feel awkward around his peers and adults, it was another to feel so insecure around people half his age and size.

And to rub salt in the wound, unlike the vast majority of the time where Hinata acted like the children he’s coaching—excited and barely contained energy like wind up toys on the verge of release—today he’s like this calm alien presence. He’s the epitome of Older Brother, patient and helpful, full of praise and laughter, and the opposite of anything Tobio has encountered in their short acquaintance. Belatedly, Tobio remembered that Hinata has a younger sibling and it’s not as surprising now how he seamlessly fit into the role for them. Tobio also briefly thought that Hinata would someday make a great parent.

Something about that thought warmed him, a contented hum buzzing beneath his skin. What about it made him feel so proud and happy he didn’t know. Yet, the feeling remained, like the lingering heat of a hot bath.
It took Tobio a few more moments of watching before he noticed he wasn’t the only odd man out. Across from him stood a girl, bigger than the rest, a fact Tobio hadn’t noticed before. She stood by, watching with Hinata coach the rest, chewing a fingernail nervously with longing darkening her brown eyes. She clutched a volleyball to her chest, obviously one she brought with her, as if it was her greatest possession. Frankly, Tobio could relate.

It was mostly likely that, the way she protected her ball, arms wrapped right around it, that drew him to her, like a string of fate created from an invisible bond. He shuffled up to her, trying to affect his most disarming expression and appear as harmless as possible.

“Hi-uh...do you want to-to join them?”

She jerked in fright, snapping her head up and jostling the two long braids hanging over her shoulder, to stare at him with a look like a deer about to be mowed down by a semi. Tobio attempted a smile, as awkward as it was, and realized a beat to late that was probably the wrong move as she began backing away, gripping her ball even tighter, and scrunching her chubby face up in what Tobio was sure would follow the screech of terror.

He immediately put his hands up before the first whimper could make it past her lips, palms outward in the universal sign of I-come-in-peace, straining to keep his voice as calm and light as possible.

“Whoa...hey...no, please...please don’t scream. I swear I’m not, like, trying to hurt you or...anything.”

When she hesitated, he took his chance, adding, “See that guy?” He point behind him at Hinata who was preoccupied with the group. “Th-that’s my teammate.”

The girl watched him warily, her big eyes shifting between him and Hinata in anxious suspicion. Ugh. How did Hinata do this?

“Um...do you want to play with them?”

Her eyes locked on to him, her face paling a little as she quickly shook her head.

“Okay, okay,” Tobio breathed, hands bouncing in the air in a placating gesture, though he wasn’t sure which of them he was trying to comfort. He kept looking around, eyes vaguely darting over the park as he fought to come up with anything else to say or do. Finally he sighed and just gave up. He was trying to hard to be like Hinata, a big brother and someone the kid could feel comfortable around.

That wasn’t him, he was just too damn awkward. So, instead he tried a different approach. He straightened up and crossed his arms, trying to look stern and adult-like without being scary. “What’s your name, kid?” He asked, his voice firm.

It had a one in a million chance of blowing up in his face, except it worked. Miracle of miracles.

“U-Ueyama Riku,” she stuttered, though she looked like she wanted to bolt.

Tobio nodded at her. “Um, Ri-Riku-chan,” Tobio cleared his throat, “Why does it look like you wanna join if you don’t...want...to...?”

God he sucked at this.

Riku’s face flushed, pink crawling across her cheeks, and her eyes went watery with tears. Great.
“Wait, wait,” Tobio strained to keep his patience and not run away himself, “I mean, it’s cool if you don’t, but it just looked like you wanted to play too.” Riku, to her credit, didn’t bust out wailing, sniffing instead as Tobio waited to see if she would answer him.

It took a moment, and though she wouldn’t meet his eye this time, she did offer an answer, “Because they make fun of me.”

Tobio cocked his head to one side confused. “Yeah, so?”

Her little lip wobbled. “It’s because I’m so big. They call me Giant and say I’ll step on them.”

Tobio snorted in offense, taking a real good look at the girl. She was bigger than the others, taller and thicker built, but not fat except in the way most young kids are before baby fat starts to fall off. Tobio wondered what kind of foreign blood flows through her for her to be so big at her age when she’s obviously the same age as the kids surrounding Hinata.

“Is that your ball?” He asked, changing the subject because he doesn’t know how to help with body image issues.

Riku looks at him, then the ball and back, her eyes lighting up. She nods with enthusiastic energy, her sad eyes lighting up with new found excitement. “Yep, my daddy got it for me. He says I’m gonna be the next big thing.”

Tobio can’t help the smile that pulls at his mouth to see another human so excited about the sport he loves. “You like volleyball, huh?”

Another emphatic nod, this time followed by a small grin.

“What position do you like?”

At this, Riku bit at her bottom lip, shyness washing over her before she answered him. “Setter,” she whispered.

Tobio loved this child.

“I’m a setter for my team,” he told her, feeling giddy at the look of awe that fell over her, the stars in her eyes addicting Tobio in that very moment.

No wonder Hinata shone so brightly under looks like that. No one has ever looked at Tobio that way.

“Really?” She asked, wonder in her soft voice.

He nodded, “Yep, and size is one of your greatest weapons in this sport.”

“That’s what my daddy says. And he says I shouldn’t worry about what everyone else says.” He smile dampened slightly, sadness and insecurity taking over.

Tobio gazed at her, his expression going grave, “He’s right, Riku-chan. With skill and size, you can dominate a court and show them how powerful you really are. Have you had any practice as a setter?”

She nodded, “I play at the center in town on Thursdays after school when my daddy works late.”

Tobio considered that, knowing she probably doesn’t get much one-on-one time there since it would be full of children at that time.
“I-I can help you practice...if you like?” He tentatively offered.

Her eyes grow wide and her face flushed as she happily nodded, her little head bouncing like those bobble head dolls.

After that, Tobio spent the next hour with Riku, showing her basic stances, correcting posture, and giving her small tips. By the time they’re done, they’re both sweaty and Tobio is feeling a sense is satisfaction he usually only gets when he has a successful practice with Hinata.

He’s on one knee, finishing up when a shadow falls over him. Tobio ignored it, keeping his attention on Riku.

“...and remember what I told you, practice that form everyday. Against a wall or while you’re laying in bed. Remember, keep your wrists and shoulders loose, don’t lock up. And the biggest thing? Don’t let them intimidate you. Keep your focus on your goal, okay?”

“Okay, big brother! Thank you!” She exclaimed, giving him a low bow before running off with a wave.

Tobio stood up, dusting off his knees, then turned to Hinata. For a brief moment he caught a glimpse of a soft smile and fondness behind Hinata’s brown eyes. Then it’s gone, replaced by a smirk and the glow of teasing. But that look, though just a flash, burned its way into Tobio’s brain, tripping up his heart and making his skin warm. Hinata has never looked at him like that, and he found himself preening beneath that look of approval.

“What?!” He growled, more irritated at himself than at Hinata who continued to smirk at him like an idiot.

“Awww, Bakeyama is such a softy. Who knew?”

Tobio scoffed, “Only because she has more talent than you and she learns quicker. Maybe I should have taught her how to block instead, then I could have a partner who wasn’t such a dumbass.”

Hinata’s mouth dropped open, shock registering on his face before it darkened with anger and offense. Tobio tried not sicker.

“Rude, Bakeyama! Meanieyama! Jerkyama!” Hinata yelled, punching him in the arm for good measure before stalking off to grab his things.

Tobio did laugh then, jogging to catch up to his teammate, and feeling content. “Relax dumbass, I’m joking.”

Hinata snatched up his sports bag, turning to glare at him. “You mean that?” he asked, not hiding his skepticism.

Tobio shrugged, still grinning. “I mean, yeah,” he watched Hinata’s face soften, his big brown eyes brightening with joy, before adding, “Of course you make a better partner than her.” He bends down, grabbing his own bag and walking off leaving Hinata to stew in his answer.

He could tell the moment Hinata realized he didn’t get the apology he’d been wanting when he yelled, “Kageyama! You asshole!”

Tobio grinned but didn’t turn around and kept walking. Seconds later Hinata was beside him, pestered to explain himself.
“So you still think she’s more talented than me? Do you? Bakeyama! Do you? Answer me, jerk! Huh?! Oi! Do you?! Is she more talented than me?!”

~8~

Tobio had to buy Hinata ice cream to keep him from sulking as they ended their day. He hadn’t meant to really piss him off, it’d just been hilarious to see Hinata so bent over Tobio’s opinion of the girl, as if he might actually replace him.

Like he would do something so ridiculous.

Tobio watched Hinata from the corner of his eye as he happily hummed some random tune while he licked at a vanilla cone, the most expensive one the combini had because he’s a brat and felt Tobio owed him for his hurt feelings.

Tobio was equally happy to give him what he wanted if it brought back his glowing smile and close to strangling him because that ice cream had nearly cleaned him out. He got an allowance from his parents regularly, mostly so he could keep up with his volleyball needs such as buying tape or knee pads when necessary. It saved his parents time and aggravation since he could be picky about brands. Thankfully he hadn’t needed anything recently, so the splurge shouldn’t hurt him too bad, but still, never hurt to stay prepared.

Regardless, Hinata was apparently appeased and he munched content and happy as they walked in the growing evening. Tobio mouthed at his own treat, a fruity popsicle and something cheap. The chill was mostly what mattered to him in the summer heat that clung lazily to the late afternoon.

He nearly tripped over his own feet as he shuffled along beside Hinata, subtlety watching his pink tongue dart out to take long swipes at the cream, licking off his fingers as the hot air melted the treat, crisp white dripping down Hinata’s knuckles when he wasn’t quick enough to catch it. Tobio’s own snack was left forgotten, to die a slow death, as he stared transfixed. He must not have picked his foot up enough because the toe of his shoe caught the sidewalk, and he jerked to catch himself before he face-planted against the hard stone. There was a wet splat that followed and he looked down to see what was left of his popsicle, judging him from its declining state on the hot concrete.

“Shit,” Tobio hissed as Hinata started cackling.

“Sucks to be you!” He screeched, and Tobio flung out a hand to grab him by the head and squeeze.

“Ow! Ow! Bakeyama!”

“What was that, dumbass? I didn’t hear you?”

“What was that, dumbass? I didn’t hear you?”

“Lemme go, dickwad! Should have paying attention! Don’t take your anger out on me, I didn’t drop your popsicle, stupid!”

Tobio huffed, releasing Hinata’s head and grasping at his wrist when he came too close to smacking him in the face with his ice cream. Hinata shook his head, his expression pinched and irritated.

“Ya almost made me lose my ice cream,” he pouted, eyeing his treat that was being held hostage.

Tobio grinned maliciously, then pulled Hinata closer, tilting his head while staring straight into his
wide eyes. “You’re a little shit, you know that?” Then he bit into the sweet, creamy treat, taking about half of what was left. Hinata’s mouth dropped open, an animal noise escaping his throat. His cheeks blushed red as if sunburned.

“Th-that was mine, you thief!” He screeched, and Tobio jogged a few steps ahead, laughing at Hinata’s embarrassment and indignation while ignoring the glare of heat that sent blood pooling southward. Sometimes Tobio amazed himself with his boldness.

They eventually made it back to Tobio’s house, catching the last rays of sunset as they chilled out on his porch outside his front door before Hinata had to bike home. The ice cream is gone, and Hinata reclined on the smooth wood, leaning back on his hands with his short legs stretched out in front of him, small feet waving to and fro. Tobio sat beside him, close enough to feel his body heat, the smell of grass and sweet spring flowers filling the space between them. Tobio rested his elbows on his knees, one hand absentmindedly playing with the damp hairs on the back of his neck as he tried not to stare at Hinata, the red-orange glow of the setting sun making his hair look like wildfire.

There was a subtle added sweetness to Hinata’s scent, a hint of something that Tobio has never smelled before. It wasn’t there earlier in the day, and he started noticing the change after they finished up at the park. The scent was intoxicating, even if it was barely present, and Tobio had to actively fight against sucking in deep breaths to fill his lungs with as much of it as he could.

“Why do you smell so good all of a sudden?” The words were out of his mouth before he could stop them. He would feel embarrassed, but the scent fogged his head slightly, making him think of little else but being as close to Hinata as possible.

Hinata snorted, the look he threw Tobio telling him how weird Hinata thought he was. That was until some sort of understanding or recognition passed over his features followed closely by something like horror and disgust.

Suddenly Hinata was standing on his feet, grabbing his bag like he was in a rush to evacuate a natural disaster. “I gotta go,” he mumbled, heading over to where his bike leaned against the house. Tobio stood, too, slower and confused about his sudden need to leave. “Wait, why? I was hoping you’d...if you want you could just...stay.” Of course the invitation has to be awkward, but Tobio had never asked anyone to spend the night before and he really didn’t want Hinata to leave yet. A) He had fun that afternoon and it was the weekend so, why not? And B) Tobio just wanted to be close to him, to continue to breath in that scent.

Hinata turned to look at him, both a desire to accept the invitation and decline it warring on his face. He shook his head after a moment, settling on declining.

“I don’t think that’d be a good idea.”

Tobio tried not to let the hurt he felt at the rejection show. It wasn’t often he took a chance, putting himself out there like he just did. He should have expected it, however, getting to hang out with Hinata—with anyone—outside of school and volleyball had been a miracle as it was. Tobio should know by now not to press his luck.

“It’s—it’s not...you,” Hinata hastily tried to explain, and he looked a little panicked. Tobio obviously wasn’t doing a good job at hiding his disappointment.

“It’s okay...fine...” Tobio muttered, staring at the ground.

“No, Kageyama, it’s...it’s not you.” Hinata sighed, heavy and defeated, and Tobio looked at him,
still confused, embarrassed, and now growing a little irritated.

“I said it’s fine, dumbass—”

“I’m sorry! Tsukishima...what happened, before—I mean I don’t...can’t...” Hinata trailed off, and Tobio grew tense at the mention of that bastard. What does he have to do with any of this?

Even in the dim light coming from his living room windows, Tobio could see Hinata’s eyes swimming with frustrated tears. Tobio hated that whatever it was that caused Hinata to feel so sad, but dread was sitting heavy in his gut, and Tobio couldn’t help but think of the rumors that flared up around Hinata and that sarcastic asshole a month ago.

“Do...do you li-like him?” Tobio asked, scuffling the toe of his shoe on the concrete of his driveway. He flinched at his own question, quickly glancing at Hinata, before avoiding his eyes and staring at the ground. He shoves his hands in the pockets of his track pants, if only to have something to do with them.

Hinata made a sound between a scoff and squeak, and Tobio finally met his eye. Hinata was doing a fair impression of a tomato as he stood next to his bike, his big eyes even bigger with shock. “Wha-!”

Tobio huffed, unsure what he wanted to say. He opened his mouth to tell Hinata nevermind, but was beaten to the punch.

“I-I mean, it’s not like...that,” Hinata started, his tone nervous. “I-I mean...I don’t know...he’s...attractive, I guess? It’s more... gwah ...”

Tobio has never been more confused in his life. Hinata stood by his bike, one hand gripping the strap of his bag, the other anxiously fidgeting with the hem of his t-shirt. Even in the dark, Tobio can see the blush heating his cheeks, his eyes wide with worry, and his bottom lip red and plump from being bitten. Hinata has not been clear with his answer, but one thing Tobio understood—he is attracted to Tsukishima.

“It’s fine,” Tobio snapped, not wanting to heard anymore, and Hinata flinches from his hash tone. “It’s fine,” he repeated, this time forcing his voice to be more gentle.

“You don’t understand,” Hinata argued. And he’s right, Tobio doesn’t understand. Tsukishima is a useless piece of shit who thinks he’s above everyone else. How Hinata could be...it doesn’t matter anyway. Hinata doesn’t belong to Tobio, even if he wished it were so.

Hinata sighed, lifting his bike from the wall and straddling it. “Look,” he began, sitting heavy on the seat of his bike and staring down Tobio with seriousness, “It’s not what you think, but if you still want me to...stay, then let’s make plans for next weekend, okay? Tonight just isn’t good for me, alright?”

Tobio only nodded, a little dumbfounded, even if he was still confused about their conversation only moments ago. Hinata was obviously hiding something, but Tobio doesn’t want to pry.

“Okay,” Tobio agreed.

Hinata nodded then, pedaling his bike forward a few feet to stop next to Tobio. “I mean it, Bakeyama, it’s not whatever it is your thinking, so don’t be jealous.” He grinned up at Tobio.

“Oh, dumbass, I’m not jealous!”

“Yeah, yeah,” Hinata teased. “See you Monday at practice.”
Tobio swatted him on the head for good measure, and just like that, Hinata is rolling past the gate, complaining beneath his breath. He threw Tobio one last wave before he took off, quickly disappearing around the privacy wall.

Tobio would miss that smell, but he supposed Hinata was right. That night wasn’t good for either of them. With that scent permeating the air, Tobio had been having a difficult time maintaining an appropriate distance. Who knows what he might have tried once he had Hinata inside and locked behind his bedroom door?

It was in that moment that Tobio realized his rut was approaching. However, for the first time ever, he wasn’t dreading it.

Chapter End Notes

Once again, thanks for hanging with me. I'll see you soon.

Comments and kudos always welcome!
Chapter 14: In Which Tsuki Does (Not) Have Feelings

Chapter Summary

Tsuki is Tsuffering.

(Had to do it)

Chapter Notes

Hey look at that, another Christmas miracle. Anyway, don't expect the next chapter for a few weeks, I haven't even started. But, it shouldn't take me nearly as much time as chapter 13 since I at least know what I'm writing about. This chapter is shorter than my average, so I apologize. It just didn't make sense to throw in a pov switch when some drama is about to go down. Thanks to all of you who are still following this story. All of your comments and kudos really encourage me to keep going, even when I'm struggling to overcome writer's block. Enjoy, my pretties.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

First Year, High School, Summer

Practice had barely ended when Takeda-sensei came stumbling through the gym door, breathless and vibrating with excitement. Everyone gathered round and listened as he explained how they'd been invited to a weekend training camp with a few powerhouse schools in Tokyo, including their rival, Nekoma.

The anticipation rippled through the team, sinking its claws into Kei despite his best defense, though he'd never admit it out loud. The team really needed this opportunity, especially after the loss against Seijoh, and even he wasn’t narrow-minded enough to deny that.

The announcement was made even better when they were informed that all their grades had to be up to par in order to participate. Call Kei petty, but the possibility of the Shrimp and his moronic boyfriend missing out due to their shared stupidity was the clinch pin in his budding enthusiasm. Kei spent enough time forced to interact with them, and the first training camp had been traumatizing enough. If he could, by some miracle, attend this one without Hinata’s dumb face ruining it, well, all the better for him.

Which is precisely why he declined them when they beseeched his help in studying. After practice, he and Yamaguchi were headed home when he was accosted by their whining, or rather Hinata’s whining, because god forbid, Kageyama lower himself to do so.

“I don’t wanna,” was his succinct reply the moment the request spilled out of the Shrimp’s pouty mouth. Kei was surprised they even bothered considering how he rubbed it in that he would have no problems keeping his own grades up.
“P-please, Tsukishima? Just twenty—even ten—minutes a day, or just some study tips would help?” Hinata attempted to bow before him as he kept a hold of his bike, holding his gaze with those big ass, puppy dog eyes that glittered hopefully and those pouty fucking lips.

Ugh, it was pathetic how quickly his resolve was giving under the weight of that pleading look. Kei might have been more lenient if it weren’t for the fact that Kageyama would most likely tag along.

He glanced at Yamaguchi, begging for his help, and his friend uncharacteristically kept quiet, his expression carefully neutral.

Well dammit all to hell. If he was going to be dragged into this ridiculous endeavor, Kei absolutely refused to go without a fight.

“Awww,” he started, turning condescending eyes on Kageyama, “I guess it means more to your boyfriend to go to camp if he’s the only one asking.” Kei turned his attention to Hinata before Kageyama could splutter a response, purposefully softening his features and allowing a tiny smile to slip through. Kei shrugged and in a sweet voice, answered Hinata, “Why not, Shrimp. I’m sure there are ways of raising your grades. Just takes a little proper...motivation.”

Kageyama jolted to life just as Hinata’s face went from pale to sunburnt.

“Wh-No, he’s not-Tsuki-” Hinata stumbled over his words, which wasn’t unusual for him, but Kei took wicked pleasure in how flustered he got, and how the scent of springtime suddenly flooded the evening air around them.

Interesting...

“HELP ME TOO!”

Three sets of eyes fell on Kageyama who bowed low, almost ninety degrees, in effort to persuade Kei, who clicked his tongue in disapproval.

“So the King can humble himself to a mere commoner like me,” Kei sneered. His stomach dropping even though he’d known there was no way Kageyama would stay behind. Still, a very small part of himself had been hoping the King’s dislike of him would deter him.

“I can when it’s important enough,” Kageyama snapped back, his blue eyes flashing smug knowing he had Kei backed into a corner. “Besides, I wouldn’t wanna leave Hinata to deal with you alone.”

Kei glared at him, putting as much dislike behind the look as possible, the intent behind Kageyama’s words not going unnoticed.

I’ll never leave you alone with him.

Kei ground his teeth in frustration. He had told Kageyama he didn’t want anything to do with Hinata. The statement had been impulsive, following on the heels of the incident between him and the Shrimp a few weeks ago. He hadn’t wanted Kageyama to think he was interested in the idiot, no matter how his hormones protested. Now he wished he hadn’t been so rash, and god did admitting that piss him off.

“Whatever,” Kei dismissed, drawing on every ounce of his strength to hold onto his cool detachment.

“Does this mean you’ll help?” Hinata prompted again, and Kei couldn’t help that his heart rate picked up under Hinata’s stare, his brown eyes holding him fast like vines keeping him planted to the
asphalt. There have been moments when Kei has been caught beneath the intensity of that look, and he always felt small and weak, his hateful personality laid bare for what it was; his insecurity at being not good enough and jealousy for not being chosen. This was one of those moments.

Still, the brain is amazing for its resiliency, it’s ability sink into itself and hide from the things it was not yet ready to cope with. A car horn sounded somewhere in the distance, cutting through the tension binding Kei to Hinata, and he felt the awareness of the last few minutes dissipate like smoke.

Kei abruptly turned and walked off, leaving Yamaguchi to scramble after him.

“Tsukishima!” Hinata yelled, and Kei honestly wasn’t sure if the call was because he still wanted Tsuki to tutor him, or if it was for something else entirely.

“Tomorrow after, practice,” Kei called over his shoulder without looking back, “One hour. Don’t ask for more.”

Kei left the King and his Queen behind, walking quickly to put as much distance between them as possible, and hopefully leaving behind the last ten minutes.

“You know you’re not obligated to help them,” Yamaguchi piped up, his voice so quiet it was almost a whisper, and Kei nearly missed it.

Kei cocked an eyebrow at his unusually tight-lipped best friend. Yamaguchi had been suspiciously quiet the entire time.

“Now you talk?” Kei scoffed. “What happened to earlier? If you wanted to object, you could have helped out back there. Besides, if I didn’t agree, you know the Shrimp would just pester me until I gave in.”

“Yeah,” Yamaguchi sighed, “I know.”

Kei side-eyed him, unsure if he was commenting on the first statement or the second. Yamaguchi had been acting weird lately. Kei couldn’t put his finger on it, but his attitude worried him. He was afraid Yamaguchi would read too much into Kei’s... feelings (they’ve been friends for a long time so Kei is under no illusions that Yamaguchi doesn’t know something is going on with him concerning the Shrimp), and Kei wasn’t ready to discuss whatever all this was. He could barely handle admitting it to himself, in his head.

“I’ll help,” Yamaguchi offered, breaking into Kei’s thoughts. Kei glanced at him, Yamaguchi grinning back in his typical way. It made Kei feel a little better about things between them, but the lingering concern still clung to him in the corner of his mind.

“Sure.”

It was a good thing Yamaguchi volunteered, too, because the next afternoon Kei was pretty sure if he hadn’t been there to anchor him, Kei would have either murdered the idiot duo or slit his own wrists in disgust.

“The lack of brain power between you two is rather astounding. It’s amazing you have been able to function as humans all these years,” Kei snapped, his nerves raw.

Kageyama glared at him, while Hinata ducked his head in embarrassment, whining about Tsuki being a meanie. Honestly, they’ve gone over the same homework twice now and neither seemed to be making progress with understanding. It didn’t help that earlier, Daichi proved that Kageyama was capable of actual learning when he ran through the hand signals Suga had developed like they had
become a second language. Ironic, since the idiot King could barely comprehend his own native tongue.

Luckily the hour was almost up. Not only was Kei’s patience quickly depleting with their stupidity and constant bickering, but he had also noticed the covert glances they stole of one another between insults.

It was nauseating. Kei kinda wanted to smash their faces together, if only to fucking move on from the shojo-esq, angst-y pining, and he wasn’t sure if he could suffer another day of it without screaming. It didn’t help that his senses were constantly drowned under their mingling scents—Hinata’s pleasant, floral aroma softening the King’s decaying stench. It also didn’t help that he had the urge to bare his teeth and challenge Kageyama for the Shrimp’s attention.

All of it made Kei feel out of control, as if his body belonged to something else with a mind of its own. Despite the fact that he couldn’t detect anything stronger than mild body odor from sweating so much, Kei knew his body was releasing pheromones to combat Kageyama’s. It was an involuntary and subtle challenge, and the worst was Kageyama picked up on the change, smirking to himself, and knowing Kei was in no position to act on his irritation. They weren’t the only ones in the club room studying.

“Time’s up!” He declared, a little more manic than he would have preferred.

“Wai-Tsuki-“ Hinata began to plead but fell quiet with a murderous look from Kei.

“Stuff it, Shrimp, torture someone else with your stupidity,” Kei snapped, no longer able to restrain himself, though he nearly apologized at the hurt look that clouded Hinata’s gaze and sour scent that filled the room. Instead, Kei smashed down any and all feelings he was having and turned away to get his things.

He grit his teeth when Kageyama’s awful aroma flooded his nose, overwhelming Kei’s in an effort to comfort their distressed teammate. It wasn’t anything he hadn’t experienced before, the same thing happened after their loss to Seijoh. He hated it. But instead of lashing out like he wanted, Kei ran, darting from the clubroom like he was on fire, Yamaguchi scrambling to follow him.

It was a relief to finally escape when the hour was up. Kei rushed out of the club room, his muscles relaxing from the tense state he’d been in all night. Yamaguchi followed close behind, silent, a strange aura pouring off him.

Kei has already spent his afternoon in a constant state of stress, he had no patience left to deal with it coming off his best friend. “What’s wrong with you,” He asked bluntly, eyes narrowed as he watched Yamaguchi from his periphery.

Yamaguchi didn’t say anything at first, the only sign he heard Kei being the way his mouth drew into a tight line.

Kei slowed to a stop, turning on Yamaguchi, forcing a confrontation. “What the hell is it, Yamaguchi?!?” He demanded in an exasperated tone.

Yamaguchi barely met his frustrated gaze, shrugging as he scuffed the toe of his tennis shoe along the concrete sidewalk. A warm summer breeze picked up, not doing much to cool the sweat from practice.

Yamaguchi took a deep breath and harshly exhaled, “You just seem more,” here he waved vaguely as he struggled to find the right word, “Uptight, I guess, when you’re around them.” Yamaguchi
didn’t need to clarify, Tsukishima knew the ‘them’ he was talking about. What he didn’t understand was the weird undertone that hung on the statement. He was a little afraid of asking Yamaguchi to define his meaning.

So, despite the warning bells ringing in his head, Kei simply confirmed, “Well, yeah, they’re stressful and their dumbassery knows no bounds.”

“Hmm,” Yamaguchi answered vaguely, “No, I mean, are you-wait, um,” his mouth hung open as if he wanted to say something more and his eyes searched Kei’s face. Dread pooled in Kei’s stomach as he stayed quiet, praying Yamaguchi wouldn’t continue.

Finally, Yamaguchi shook his head. “You know what? Nevermind.” Yamaguchi grinned weakly at him as Kei sighed feeling like he dodged a bullet, and he had no idea what the target was.

“Let’s get out of here and go eat, I’m starving.” It was an obvious avoidance tactic, and as much as Kei didn’t want to leave things so tense between them, he was glad for the subject change.

“Yeah, me too. I think I burned more calories tutoring those two than I did in practice.” Kei really hoped Yamaguchi would pick up on his effort to return things to normal. He wasn’t disappointed.

“Right?! Did you see how quickly Kageyama ticked off those plays? He’s like a savant.”

Kei snickered, the tension abating to a whisper.

Maybe Kei could put off the inevitable conversation for a little while longer.

~8~

It was impossible not to zero in on it once Kei became aware. The Shrimp and his Majesty were about as subtle as a fart in a library—too loud and just as repulsive.

Every time Kei caught them together, they were flirting. He was astounded he never noticed before, how their constant bickering was just a cover up for burgeoning feelings.

He just wished he didn’t have to witness the disaster that were two monkeys dancing around one another. At this rate, Kei’s teeth would be worn down to useless nubs with how often and how hard he grinded them.

This wasn’t jealousy, let’s just be clear about that. The idea he could be jealous of Kageyama and Hinata’s relationship was preposterous. He refused to entertain such asinine fatuity.

So what if the Shrimp preferred vapid to intelligent, or brutish passion to cool passivity? So what if he preferred the nauseating aroma of swamp decay? So what if the Shrimp smelled so good it haunted Kei’s dreams, leaving him wet and aching in the mornings?

So what if Kei, sometimes, found Hinata’s determination and unwavering friendliness, sort of, at times, endearing? But only when Kei wasn’t restraining himself from strangling the Shrimp with a net, which wasn’t often.
Fuck, none of this was helping. Kei glared down the hall, over the heads of passing students, at the idiot duo roughhousing, stuck inside because a summer storm kept everyone from venturing outdoors. And having no way to vent their excess energy, they were occupied with making a spectacle of themselves, much to the annoyance of other students trying to relax during their lunch hour. Every so often he caught those same fleeting glances he noticed during their study session, thrown at the other when one wasn’t paying attention.

Kei barely kept himself from sneering in disgust.

Kei’s attraction to Hinata left him baffled beyond reason. They had nothing in common. Besides volleyball, as far as Kei new, they shared no common interests, no similar goals.

To be honest, Kei couldn’t really say that he knew Hinata well enough to make any factual judgements beyond what information he already had, but that wasn’t the point. The Shrimp was annoying, and stupid, and too honest for his own good.

He was also kind hearted, and loyal, and bubbly, and… okay, sometimes, in the right light, when no one else was around, Kei sorta, kinda, thought Hinata was...adorable. Cute even.

Kei rubbed his face beneath his glasses, trying to mentally choke that thought to death. The Shrimp had no business occupying the amount of space in Kei’s head that he currently had.

Suddenly, Hinata looked up, rolling his eyes at something Kageyama said. Kei froze, momentarily caught in the light that was Hinata’s fiery gaze. Kei’s pulse spiked, those brown eyes glittering like precious gems as they watched him. Then Hinata smiled, not the bright blazing grin that’s commonly pinned to his expression. No, this was softer, more intimate, and maybe a little unsure.

Kei glared back, refusing to acknowledge his pounding heart and sweaty palms. Refusing to think about the blush that was rising to the surface of his cheeks, across his nose, and even heating up the tips of his ears. Kei sent Hinata the most scathing look he had in his repertoire, forcing him to back down.

That smile slipped, overtaken by slight distress, then a hint of hurt, before Hinata broke eye contact and engaged Kageyama beside him.

Kei snickered, feeling victorious, but that conquering feeling sunk quickly below shame and insecurity.

This is so fucking stupid, he thought as he made an about-face, leaving Yamaguchi in the middle of a sentence, and too pissed to care.

He was so fucked, and it was all so fucking stupid.

~8~

Journaling was partly a distraction. Kei didn’t want to spend too much time thinking too seriously about things—those emotions that fluttered under the surface of his consciousness, and concerned a sweet smelling redhead. He didn’t like where those contemplations often took him, confusing and complicated as they were.

In reality, Kei had started his hobby a year or two prior, when he received vague answers from his
doctor and could find no concrete information about his condition on the internet. At that time, he’d started a journal. It was mostly just thoughts and hypotheticals, but sometimes he came across an article or post on the internet and began to record his “discoveries” on paper. When bored, or especially anxious about things, he’d pull the journal out and try to connect the little bits of information he’d collected. So far it had all amounted to nothing and nada.

Lately, however, Kei was pouring through his journal regularly, if only to keep his mind busy and away from flowers, freshly mowed grass, and springtime.

Like he said, a distraction.

Currently, Kei was sitting in his bed, perusing older notes and scratching out the more obviously outstanding theories. It was embarrassing what his fourteen year old self had come up with back then; ideas such as exotic diseases from rare insects or chemical pollution that could have affected him. It was embarrassing because he knew this was a genetic disorder passed down from his mother and not anything external. Also, he was very obviously going through a superhero phase. Still, as dumb as those thoughts may have been, they were still better than the void of factual data that he had.

Kei dropped his hands, both the notebook and pencil tumbling from them as he slumped, dejected in his constant state of frustration. His head thumped against the headboard as he stared up at his ceiling. It was all so stupid, and he wished he could let it go. It’s not as if his disorder was that disruptive to his life, he’d mostly learned to live with the effects. Yet, that little niggling whisper telling him he wasn’t fully human wouldn’t be quiet, and it frightened him.

It frightened him because in all his searching he’d never come across another case of people sprouting claws and fangs, or of having a superhuman sense of smell, or any of the other strange side effects that Kei regularly experienced.

Of course there were the fables of werewolves, and the hoaxes of attention seekers, and the rare extremist furry. Just, none of it was real. None of them came close to sharing the experiences of his crippling sex drive, or aggression, or physical changes. He was alone.

Because he’d be damned if he count himself along with the Shrimp and his arrogant boyfriend.

Kei thought back over the last few weeks. Since their loss against Seijoh, and how those two seemed to have grown even closer. A fact that left a bitter taste in Kei’s mouth whether he wanted to accept it or not.

Neither he nor the idiot duo have yet to broach the subject of their shared weirdness, but they had to know by now the three of them shared this one common problem. It’s not like the two have never talked about it, Kei heard them discussing it. To be fair, however, it’s not like he has tried to approach them, but even if Kei wanted to, how would he even do it? With the bad blood lingering between him and the other two, the idea that he could discuss his concerns and fears with them seemed impossible.

Not that he actually wanted to talk to them.

Kei sighed, it was getting more and more difficult to deny these... feelings.

Especially if it meant interacting with Kageyama. If only there were a way to isolate the Shrimp from Kageyama so Kei could talk to him. Maybe then he could talk to someone who understood him.

Truthfully, Kei would just like to have Hinata’s attention on him for even the slightest moment,
without Kageyama hanging around like an overprotective watchdog. Yet, deep down, Kei was too insecure to engage Hinata for fear the Shrimp would be put off by him. It’s not like Kei goes out of his way to soften his demeanor, not that he would. That would suggest he cared.

Still...some part of him craved being close with Hinata and his sweet, sweet smell...

Kei groaned, falling over onto his side on his bed, burying his face in his pillow. He wanted to scream. No matter how hard he tried, his thoughts always seemed to drift back to the Shrimp and the weird need Kei had to be near him. Regardless, unexplainable feelings or no, it would be nice to talk to someone who understood what he was dealing with.

His cell dinged, interrupting his pouting. Without looking he made a grab for it as it dangled precariously off his bed. He lifted his head enough to check the notification on the screen before swiping. It was a message from his aunt, his mother’s sister.

A long time ago, before he and his brother had been born, Kei’s mother was studying to be an anthropologist with her sister. His mother’s priorities changed when she met his father, fell in love, and decided to raise a family instead. His mother and aunt stayed close regardless of their different chosen paths, and he’d grown up hearing stories of his aunt’s travels or being the recipient of strange foreign gifts.

His aunt was wild and loved what she did, and she was also the smartest person Kei had ever known. He respected her and in turn she treated him with just as much respect. They began communicating via texts and email several months ago after he’d read an article from a well known colleague of hers, and he questioned her about it. Kei had been so desperate to talk to someone about his condition, someone with an educated background and worldly understanding, that he’d began to slowly tell her things about himself. Of course he’d covered it up with a little white lie—that he was researching a topic on genetics that was briefly touched on in one of his classes, and needed help with data searching. She’d been more than happy to help.

It wasn’t as if Kei couldn’t talk to his family who knew more than anyone else. However, they didn’t know everything, and what they did know they never actually discussed. They didn’t treat him any different, he was their son and brother, nothing would change that, but there was also a tension that always hovered beneath the surface; a wariness of Kei that made him feel just a little out-of-place. It wasn’t as bad as the feeling of being an alien living on a strange planet—something he experiences daily—but sometimes he caught his mother staring at him as if he was a stranger or noticed when his father tensed when they shared physical affection. If anyone in his family treated him without reservation, it would be his brother, but that just might be a result of Kei’s emotional distance and the wall between them that Akiteru wanted to break down. Kei did not know how much his extended family knew, but he suspected it wasn’t much since they remained unaffected when visits occurred. He preferred to keep it that way, hence the white lie to his aunt.

Drawing his attention back to his phone, Kei swiped at the screen, opening up to his mail app. He skimmed the brief text of explanation from his aunt. Since he’d first asked her about the information regarding his condition, she’d been periodically sending him interesting stories and research. Most of it was inconsequential, it was hard to get more relevant information when he didn’t know what he was looking for in the first place. Still, they were always interesting reads.

There was a link in the body of text that she explained was a Turkish folktale about the beginnings of a ruling empire that had a common background with Asia.

Kei touched the link that brought him to a published article about the origin of the *Indo-Islamic world*. He perused the introductory paragraphs before coming to the brief summary of the story. Apparently, it was believed that a young Turkish man, wounded from battle, found himself in the
care of a she-wolf demon. After nursing the man back to health, he impregnated her. Fearing for the life of her offspring at the hands of her enemies, she ran and hid in a cave in the Tarim Basin. There she gave birth to ten, male half-human pups. When grown, these half-wolves migrated to different areas of Asia. One half-wolf established the tribe of Asena, who eventually spawned an entire empire, ruling over his other nine brothers.

Kei huffed. Like most of his inquiries, every lead he came across led him back to one common myth; that of the union between man and wolf. He rolled his eyes at yet another werewolf story and downloaded a pdf file that had been attached to the email. The screen switched to Adobe Reader, and another article loaded onto the page.

Kei skimmed this article, too, paying only half attention to the content. However, half way through the reading, Kei began to get drawn in; words like *rut* and *mating*, and *Alpha* and *Omega* repeatedly stuck out. Kei flicked his eyes back to the journal information, discovering belatedly that the article had been published in a well known scientific journal.

*This can’t be right*, he thought to himself. Why would a journal, famous within the scientific community and well respected, publish something so obviously made up?

Kei crawled off his bed and made his way to his desk, taking his seat in front of his laptop. He logged in and opened a browser to his favorite search engine. He typed in the information from the article in his phone and clicked search, the article popping up at once. For the next hour Kei dug through the interwebs, making sure the article was legit.

It was, as far as he could tell. It had been written in 1986, more than twenty years before he’d been born, by a geneticist with a German name he couldn’t pronounce. Kei had Googled the name only to come up with a death date and a brief run down of the scientist’s career.

Kei sat back in his chair, the heaviness of his movements making the chair-back squeak under pressure. He covered his mouth with one large hand, astonishment seeping into his veins and making his blood run cold. He shivered, and it had little to do with the air conditioning in his room.

Returning to the article, Kei once again read through it, this time giving it his full focus. The topic of the article was on a relatively unknown genetic mutation called the *Beta gene*. It was discovered in a small Eastern European community in the 1970’s. The gene shared 99% of its DNA with humanity, the other 1% closely resembling that of wolves. According to research in both genetics and anthropology, the gene is passed down from the mother in either sex of the offspring. The gene manifests itself as dominant Alpha or submitting Omega.

Kei continued to read on, learning some about disposition, biology, and of course, anatomy.

The anatomy really threw Kei off. Omegas only mating with Alphas, slick (ewww), a... knot that Alphas get during orgasm.

Kei gazed down between his legs, disbelief etched in his brow before embarrassment turned his face bright red. What was he *doing*? He sighed and sat back in his chair. Regardless of the publication, and despite the *extreme* similarities, none of this was real.

Point in fact, Kei has never experienced a *knot* before, and he’s had plenty of orgasms.

Kei rubbed his eyes. Afterward he reached for his phone and bringing up his aunt’s email and typing up a quick reply, thanking her for the articles. Articles that are just another dead end on a tedious road.
Kei eventually began his pre-bedtime routine. Fifteen minutes later he burrowed into his bed, sans glasses, and headphones covering his ears. He tried to drown out the lingering turmoil those articles left behind with loud bass, but he eventually fell asleep to dreams of bright red hair, pale skin, and slick thighs.

Chapter End Notes

Comments and kudos welcome!

Also, Yachi should be making an appearance in the next chapter. I love me some HinaYachi bff times.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!