

Snowball Effect

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Snowball Effect

by [Wheviter](#)

Summary

The beginning of the week of another training camp in Tokyo started out poorly, and as the days go on things only get worse.

In which Tsukishima Kei's foot gets run over, and things begin to spiral down hill.

Notes

This was straining to write and post.

Chapter 1

Walking in the darkness of the early morning wasn't something Tsukishima Kei was against in any way. It was calm in the mornings and there was something about the stroll to the bus, and his teammates, that made him think more about how the camp would go. They would be with the other schools again, he would see Bokuto and Kuroo, which was nice because he needed the practice, to work on his timing. It's just a club, just practice. He still doesn't see any significance of the dedication and hard work of these guys, *not to mention how stupid they acted*, he thought.

Fuck, I wish I slept longer. Kei blinked, looking down at the ground as he hobbled. Tadashi left his house early, so Kei was late in leaving, or at least too late to walk with Tadashi, sadly. He ran a hand over his face and through his blonde hair. It was windy and cold, the darkness of the morning beginning to really take its toll on his vision right now.

He rubbed his arms to try and warm up a bit, his skin underneath his clothes were littered with goosebumps, since it was the morning the chilly air nipped at him more often than not. His hot breath floated upward due to the soft breeze and every once in awhile his glasses would fog up, much to his annoyance. *Should I have dressed warmer? Whatever.*

He moved one of his hands to his side and placed it on a certain spot that felt sore today. He had bumped - or better yet slammed - his side against his kitchen counter this morning on accident.

"Kei? What are you doing?" Akiteru asked after seeing the rebound of his younger brother trip over his feet and collide into the poor unsuspecting counter. Fun and games aside.. It looked pretty painful from where he was standing and Kei doubled over after the collision, his arm holding onto the counter edge and his hand clutching his side, grimacing while crouching.

"Are you okay?" Akiteru frowned after a moment when Kei didn't respond to the first thing. This time Kei responded with a quiet grunt and stood up nonchalantly while still holding his side. Kei shifted and lifted his shirt up a bit to see a black and blue spot already forming. Akiteru stood up from where he was sitting only to be glared at, a warning that his poor Kei didn't need help or any pity. Akiteru quickly looked away and sat back down in quiet fear.

Kei continued to grimace as his fingers lightly grazed over the bruise gently, earning him a wince. This was one of the last things he needed, not to mention his visiting brother witnessing an embarrassing stumble. He hoped the rest of the day would go more smoothly..

I should have put ice on it or something... or at least taken a pain relief before leaving the house. He grimaced in disapproval and stared forward with a blank and annoyed face. I could ask Yachi or Kiyoko for something when I get on the bus . A part of him was disappointed that he was already hurt in some way before even getting to the damned camp.

He felt tired, and he knew anyone would if they had to get up so early but his tired felt more like just wanting to go home and rest, not even really sleep. He wanted to relax, be in the comforts of his own home instead of meeting back up with the schools. He had been working hard. Well, relatively hard, as hard as he wanted to.

At this point, with his glasses fogging up, he was walking across the street - although the time was about to end for those on foot and crossing - and he sighed deeply, causing his glasses to steam and for his pace to slow a bit to clean off his glasses. He didn't have the best sight without them, so he stopped for a second so that he didn't trip or something stupid, but he knew stopping right there was stupider. *Come on...*

A loud honking interrupted his quiet and angry thoughts- *The hell?* and he looked up in time to see a car speed in front of him. Maybe someone late for work? He wasn't sure, he could hardly see their face with his blurred vision. He went to step back but the car moved too fast.

Oh God- oh fuck- He bit his lip harshly, his blindness becoming less of a problem. *What just-* The car rolled over his foot, bounced, then sped off again with a hand sticking out the middle finger.. Or what Kei could only assume was a middle finger. He fell back onto his ass and shoved his glasses onto his face, his vision wavering due to the new feeling of overwhelming pain. It happened so fast... he wasn't prepared to step back. Kei's breathing spiked a bit as the pain spread up to his leg and he swore he could taste blood based on how hard he was biting his poor lip. He got up and stumbled to the curb desperately, not wanting to get hit by another car and be unlucky enough to have it be something much more dangerous.

He plopped down and squeezed his eyes shut, sweat starting to bead his forehead, which did not help his temperature situation in any way. He shivered and opened his eyes again to look down at his aching and throbbing foot, nervous and anxious, scared to take off his shoe to assess the damage.. But he has to. What if it was bad enough to go to the hospital? If he broke something? That car was fucking heavy. He let out a shaky breath and found it in him to lean forward and touch his foot gingerly with his hand.

His eyes widened, excruciating pain pulsing through his foot and surging up his leg in horrible strands. He growled quietly, *How the hell am I supposed to walk? I have a block left.. I'm so fucking close...* He leaned his head back and shifted his weight for a second, nervousness wracking his body at the excruciating pain. Kei was in shock, he knew that, and he knew that standing up would send even worse pain up throughout his whole body, but he can't just sit at the side of the road looking stupid to bystanders, and he doesn't want to miss out on the camp due to their upcoming games, he can't afford to slack.

He placed his hands on the ground, they were trembling due to the shot, and hauled himself onto the leg with the non wounded foot. He had to balance himself for a second, his arms waving a bit, before he was able to finally settle on one foot. Kei looks down at his bad foot, intimidated by it as it hovered in the air.

He let out a deep sigh before stepping forward.

“Hey... did anyone else hear that?” Nishinoya stuck his pinky in his ear to try and clear it, trying to think about what he just was subject to listening to.

“Yeah.. it sounded like a scream, it was pretty loud.” Tanaka also brought up a finger, mimicking Nishinoya whilst standing right next to him. They looked nonchalant and confused, whilst Daichi looked worried.

“Who are we missing?” the captain asked and Sugawara immediately began counting those who had already arrived, his lips moving with each name he said and number he counted off before putting his hands on his hips.

“Tsukishima, Yachi and Hinata, but the scream sounded deep.” He furrowed his brows and Daichi pinched the bridge of his nose in frustration. “So it couldn’t have been Hinata, sure as hell not Yachi, not sure about Tsukishima.. Should we go out looking for them? We leave in like 5 minutes..” Suga furrowed his brows in worry and turned to look at their captain who just seemed to be in thought.

Coach Ukai stepped off of the bus quickly, “What the hell was that? Are you all alright? It’s too early to be screaming.” He growled and Takeda stepped off after him.

“Yeah, it wasn’t us, we’re missing Tsukishima, Yachi and Hinata, though. It might have been one of th-” Daichi started before almost getting knocked off his feet by a certain ginger kid sprinting over towards them with a bewildered look on his face that sent everyone into a concerned state. “Was that you? Are you alright?” Daichi immediately asked.

Hinata nodded quickly, panting and out of breath, “Yeah- wait- wait no I didn’t scream I thought it was one of you guys so I came running.” Hinata looked confused and looked at all of them. “Well... okay so.. I could’ve just kept walking?? No one looks hurt??” He whined and Kageyama smacked him upside the head.

Well... we don't know that yet. Yamaguchi thought bitterly as he searched the members of their team for his blonde best friend. He felt bad now, not walking with him like they usually did, but Kei did tell him that he would probably show up late and didn’t want to move too slowly. Yam rubbed the back of his neck and frowned. The scream sounded like Tsukishima to him, but he was hoping he would be wrong.

I didn't expect to scream... then again I didn't fully expect it to hurt this much. Tsukishima was leaning against a wall, his hand squeezing his upper thigh with a blank face. Sweat continued to bead his forehead but he was working on it as well as he could. He let out a quiet sigh before he heard fast steps approaching him and his panic spiked. He turned his head quickly, bewildered, but relaxed.

“Tsukishima! Did you hear that??” Yachi exclaimed when she came upon him. Kei moved his hand away from his leg and blinked in response. *Fuck... she heard.*

“Heard what? That yell? Yeah, it was pretty loud, hard not to hear it.” He rolled his eyes and bit his lip while looking down at the ground. Yachi nodded rapidly and stepped up so that she was standing right next to him. He glanced to his side to look at her and realized she was just staring ahead, not looking at him thankfully. “You’re later than Kiyoko. Better hurry up.” He deadpanned and she pouted and looked at him.

“I found you, I’ll walk with you.” She stated stubbornly and he looked at her with one of his disgusted looks before her stubborn attitude melted and she became flustered and nervous, “I-if you want. Of course, if you want me to of course! Which I doubt-”

“Fine, whatever.” He gritted his teeth a little bit in pain. His eyes then widened, *I’ll have to walk slow, I’ve only taken one step.* He makes a face that could be chalked up to “oh God” and started walking again. Kei sucked in a breath before stepping on his hurt foot again and digging his nails into his palm. *This is impossible, it hurts.* Yachi was walking a little bit in front of him, he could get away with limping, that or he could tell her he was in immense pain and- *No.*

His brows furrowed in confusion at his own thought process. It was the smartest answer, the smartest choice, why did he feel like his only option was to bare with it? To wait?

It was a problem right now, he should be actively looking for an answer. That’s what he did, it was only logical, it was the smartest choice. He closed his eyes before looking to the side and down at Yachi. “H-” he opened his mouth before his face went totally blank with subtle confusion. *What’s up with her..*

Yachi was staring in front of her intently as she walked. She was gaining more distance and Kei felt a bit more comfortable to limp and spare himself the facade of walking normally. She looked deep in thought and he didn’t understand, nor exactly cared, what she was thinking about. She did knock the words out of his mouth, that was something-

“I don’t really know how you keep it together when you’re playing.” Okay well that was surprising. Kei blinked in confusion and slight shock, limping behind her.

“What do you mean?” He asked, it’s not that he didn’t understand the question, it was that he didn’t understand how to answer quite yet.

“I mean!! You look so cool and collected on the court and off the court a lot!” she exclaimed again. Kei blinked before having a sort of eureka expression appear on his face.

“Oh, that’s because it’s just a game.” He deadpanned and she gasped and looked at him.

“Wh- what does that mean??” she looked at him bewildered, walking backwards to keep looking at him.

“Exactly what I said.” Kei shrugged, “It’s just a game, what’s the use of getting so worked up over it? Win or lose, why feel the disappointment?” He grunted, his leg stinging.

“Well... everyone works so hard, they get so sad and disappointed over their losses, I think I understand? But then why...” she paled a bit and Kei already knew she had no idea to voice out her next sentence and decided against finishing her sentence. He didn’t exactly want to get into it anyway. “Nevermind, i’m so sorry!” She stopped and went to bow before tripped over her legs and falling backwards.

Kei’s eyes widened and he jumped forward, despite the pain in his foot, and grabbed her. He wrapped an arm around her and kept her from going down. She looked dazed and surprised and looked down at the ground. She then panicked, her eyes wide and she looked up at Kei with a flushed, embarrassed face.

“Ohhhh! I’m sorry I’m sorry!” She bellowed and Kei rolled his eyes, shifting painfully on his foot to help her back up. As soon as they were both standing she dropped to her knees and bowed. He looked at her with subtle disgust at the gesture.

“It’s no big deal.” He rubbed the back of his neck and sighed, “Just watch where you’re going.” he felt like he was gonna get a headache with how many times he rolled his eyes in these passed few minutes. Yachi looked up with big eyes before standing up and brushing herself off.

She went back to walking in front of him and he held a near permanent grimace, her apologizing profusely before they reached the school.

"Speak of the devil." Tanaka stated loudly as they rounded the corner. "Or.. Devils." he crossed his arms and Daichi rushed over to them.

"Are you two alright? That scream didn't come from either of you, did it?" he said worriedly and Yachi smiled and shook her head confidently. Kei shook his head in return with a blank look. Daichi visibly relaxed, the concerned feeling over everyone dissipating.

Coach Ukai then did another count off and after a few minutes of standing next to Yamaguchi in the most ripping pain possible - *how does it hurt standing still more than it hurts getting walked on?* - they boarded the bus.

Tadashi's been looking at me weird. Kei sat down in his seat and sneered, squeezing his eyes shut due to the discomfort of his foot, relieving the pressure seemed to make it more restless. Yamaguchi took a seat next to him and furrowed his brows in concern.

"Tsukki? Are you okay?" he asked quietly, and Kei noted the cautious and mellow tone he used. Kei opened his eyes and his face lost the sneer, he blinked then nodded.

"Yeah, fine, just tired." Kei avoided his gaze and looked out the window with a yawn, but he couldn't shake the prying eyes of his best friend seated next to him. Then he saw the freckled boy open his mouth in Kei's peripheral vision, "Shut up Yamaguchi." he mumbled and Yamaguchi smiled.

"I didn't even say anything yet." the freckled boy crossed his arms and Kei shrugged, making Yamaguchi's smile a bit wider. "Sorry Tsukki."

Kei grunted and ran a hand through his hair. Three hours, and his leg felt uncomfortable without any pressure on it.

Rubbing his upper thigh didn't look suspicious, but it did seem pointless. His foot felt hot and it throbbed painfully, but the more he did nothing with it the more numb and uncomfortable it got. It was almost unbearable, the discomfort from the limb nearly hurt as much as the shock of walking on it for the first time after his stumble in the street with a fucking heavy vehicle.

The first step was by far the hardest, the strain put onto my stupid foot from pressing it against the ground. The pain went through my whole body - i'd be crazy if I didn't scream. Kei bit his lip and leaned down further to gingerly touch his foot again. He wasn't able to get the shoe off even on the bus, and now they were reaching closer and closer to their destination. It was too uncomfortable to nap, although Yamaguchi snoozed peacefully next to him. He had to hobble quickly to the bus, quick steps of panic and pain and biting his lip to keep himself from yelling out again. The leisurely standing brought forth such an excruciating pain.. He was surprised he kept it all together. *I'm pretty fucking great.*

Well.. now it was numb. Tsukishima blinked and squeezed his foot, he felt nothing. *That... that isn't good.* Kei panicked for a second, losing his cool and grabbing his sock and shoe and pulling it off a little bit but was surprised when he foot seemed stuck in the garments. "Oh fuck- " he pressed a finger against the sensitive skin and noted the swelling, his skin black and blue with bruising and it almost seemed red. *Am I bleeding?* He frowned before jumping when he heard a soft noise come from beside him.

"Tsukki?" Yams mumbled softly, shoving Kei back into the reality that he was on a bus and he was getting looked at worriedly. He quickly retracted his hands and looked over at Yamaguchi with a blank face. "What's wrong? Are you okay?" He sat up and put a hand on Kei's shoulder that was immediately shrugged off dismissively.

"I'm fine." His foot was covered back up with his sock and shoe, the swelling and bruising wasn't prominent now, hidden.

"Why were you.."

"Rock in my shoe." He said reassuringly to his worried freckled friend softly. Yamaguchi wasn't new to Kei smothering problems and not talking about his feelings or... or really anything. Kei was a mysterious person, even to him. He knew of Kei's problems, but other

than that he was a hard book to read, yet he prided himself on being able to anyway. Well, sometimes, at least.

“Well.. if something was wrong, you’d tell me, right?” Yam furrowed his brows and Kei looked at him for a second before nodding. *I can deal with this myself.*

“Yeah, don’t worry about it.” Kei hesitated and patted his shoulder, a sign of reassurance Yamaguchi usually doesn’t receive. Yam frowned for a second before turning his head away to look out the window tiredly. He closed his eyes in worry afterwards and Kei knew that Yam was gonna catch onto his odd behavior soon, so he stopped rubbing his thigh and mothering his aching foot. He leaned back in his seat and crossed his arms.

They were almost there and his side and foot aches terribly, it was hard to even move his body around due to his bruise on his side. It hurt so bad, he must have bumped a rib. Could he even do that? Did that even make sense? *Fuck... I have no idea. It just hurts.*

All he knew was that they had to win these practice games, he already knew he couldn’t run or slide against the ground, God forbid.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Short chapter

Nishinoya tapped his leg nervously as he looked out the window of the moving bus. He was stressing pretty hard, the weight of his bag felt a bit too heavy. The only thing really weighing him down, however, was a note. A love letter.

A confession.

Not given to him, no, the Libero had plans to give this letter to someone close to him.... Nishinoya's attention drifted from the window to the side where his eyes landed on the ace of Karasuno. Hair tied back in a bun, eyes closed and resting... Nishi couldn't help but flush at the sight.

A few weeks, maybe, his crush was beginning to develop more and more. He had liked him since the beginning, and his feelings had faded for the month Asahi had left the club.. But returning felt like a spark in Nishinoya's mind. The camp rendered them transportation-less back home, Asahi wouldn't be able to run or avoid him.

The bus stopped after three hours and standing up sounded an eruption of pops and cracks throughout the bus as the teens stretched their painfully aching limbs. They gathered their belongings, scooping up trash of junk food they had snacked on during the too-long-of-a-drive trip. The late morning air felt much nicer than the early morning air boarding the bus and the sun was slowly rising passed the clouds.

Everyone stopped to nurse their aching and sore backs, Asahi stretching, arching his back as it popped loudly, earning a laugh from Daichi. Nishi stared at him from a little bit away and

let out a gentle sigh. His hand tentatively went up to his pocket and lodged itself into the warm space. The heaviness of the letter weighed hard on Nishi, and he couldn't help but let the anxiety get the better of him in the end.

The heaviness... Nishinoya closed his eyes as his hands went to clasp around the letter and hold it- but frowned when he grabbed empty air. His eyes widened and he frantically looked around the area.

It was gone! He must have dropped it.

Kei leaned against the bus as everyone exited. *God help me* . He sighed in exasperation and looked down at his throbbing leg. There was no way he would last this week, not like this. Not crippled and miserable, sore in multiple places with each step as agonizing as the other. He didn't even want to imagine himself hopping.

It wasn't like he had a problem with the pain, no, not exactly. He was used to injuries, used to tanking through them without a care in the world seemingly. He didn't cry over spilled milk and he sure as hell wouldn't buckle under this situation, not if he could handle it. Or, at least he hopes he can handle such an injury. Things that aren't tended to may heal wrong, and he felt his pulse quicken at the idea of having a disabled foot holding him even farther back in life than he already was. *Would I be stuck limping?* He frowned and felt himself grow nervous, lost in thought and already feeling an uneasiness creeping into the back of his mind and making its home there. He assumed he'll have to get comfortable with the thought before he can really panic about the repercussions of his neglectful actions.

He stumbled out of his thoughts gracefully as something fell next to his foot. It was white, an envelope, sealed neatly and resting atop his foot now as it throbbed painfully. Kei arched a brow and bent down, picking it up and examining it. *Where the hell did this come from?* He turned it around and in bulky letters it said "Asahi" with a heart replacing the dot of the i. His eyes narrowed and his face turned emotionless.

You've got to be kidding me.

He looked around for whoever dropped there secret note at his doorstep. He didn't want to know of its owner, but holding this made him feel more and more uncomfortable by the second. What were his odds if someone spotted him with such a note? He didn't want to think about it. Thankfully, Tadashi found himself nestled in a conversation with Yachi and Suga, which means eyes were away from him as they got situated in their new surroundings. Growing comfortable with the weather and pumping themselves up for the week long workout.

Suddenly Nishinoya was in front of him and in his position of leaning on the bus he had to arch his neck just to look at the shorter, rambunctious boy in front of him.

".. Tsukishima." He started after an uncomfortably long time of just staring up at him with wide, serious eyes.

"Yes?" He arched a brow before Nishinoya's eyes darted down to the letter then back up to look into Kei's golden eyes. Kei's eyes widened and he held out his long arm to Nishi, handing him the letter. "I'm assuming this is yours." He mumbled before smirking and lifting the letter up above his head when Nishinoya went to grab it. "The ace, huh? I thought something was up but who knew you'd do something about it?" He smirked and Nishi's face turned so red Kei feared his head would blow off his shoulders.

"Give that back you shit!" He whined and hopped ungracefully. He could hop pretty high, but not as much as Hinata, which allowed him an advantage against the shorter libero. It was almost comedic- scratch that. It *was* comedic.

"You can't reach? That's a shame." he mused, but the excitement was short lived when the slightest misstep from Nishinoya slammed his toes into Kei's toes on his bad foot, eliciting a paleness from Kei and sending Nishi to the ground on his ass.

The tall blonde cringed and dropped the letter onto Nishi's chest before sliding off. Nishi furrowed his brows when he noticed the letter swish in the air and land on him before looking up at Tsukishima. It was a confusion that sunk in, the oddness of how easily Kei had given up with his torment of the short libero, but the paleness of Tsukishima's face was kinda concerning.

His letter forgotten - but not completely, he lovingly placed it back in his pocket - he stood up and frowned. "What's the matter with you? Are you alright?" He mumbled in a much softer voice.

Kei's face had paled a considerable amount and his chest strained as he tried to not make a noise of pain or discomfort from the accidental foot fall. It wasn't like Nishi meant to do that, and it was his fault for antagonizing him in the first place, so he wholeheartedly put his money on this being some sort of karma. Kei gripped his upper thigh and leaned heavily against the bus, one of his palms flushed flat against the cool metal surface. His body slouched and he squeezed his eyes shut in a pained grimace before nodding, biting his lip.

"Yeah. Sorry." he mumbled quietly and Nishinoya felt his body freeze. That.. That wasn't normal. It wasn't a normal occurrence for Tsukishima Kei to apologize to anyone other than Yamaguchi, and to hear Key say it to Nishi was a whole different game the poor libero didn't know how to play. He frowned and went to say something but Kei cut him off. "Good luck with Asahi, but I don't think you'll need it."

Nishi furrowed his brows, *what did that mean?* He then noticed Tsukishima's gaze linger and draw upward instead of looking at the libero. In return, Nishinoya hesitantly turned his head to look at whatever the blonde was looking at with his catlike curiosity.

Asahi was looking directly at them, making eye contact for a split second before the ace quickly turned his head around with a reddening face.

It felt like the world had stopped and Nishi's lips formed a large smile, absolutely beaming with the hope of his success. Nishinoya was always into girls, and he knew he always would be. He was bisexual, always wanting to experiment but never finding any guy as attractive as the girls at their school. Unlucky for him, they avoided the small pervert like the plague. There was one guy, however, who he found undeniably attractive, and ever since meeting him he liked him.

"Hey, Tsukishima?" Nishinoya looked back at the tall blonde. Color returned to his face and he looked a whole hell of a lot better, thankfully.

"Hm?"

"Thanks."

Kei paused for a second and Nishi felt satisfaction resonate with him at the fact he was able to silence the tall blonde. Kei shrugged, "Just don't fuck up, alright?" he grumbled and hauled himself off of the bus and walk off as Bokuto and Kuroo neared the Karasuno team, yelling his name every few moments.

"Everything okay?" Yamaguchi looked up as the blonde approached. A simple nod should have set him at ease but something felt off- "You're a lot quieter than usual." Tadashi turned his body fully to face him.

"Yeah. Sorry." he blanked, causing Tadashi to furrow his brows, making him feel almost worse about the situation. Kei rolled his eyes, "Yeah, it's all good." He reassured.

It truly wasn't.

Unpacking his belongings was a hassle in it's own, his foot aching with every moment of him applying the smallest amount of pressure. Not to mention every time he bent his abdomen the rippling pain reminded him that he needed to take it easy or else he would regret it heavily. *What the hell...* He grimaced, rubbed his ankle in disdain, sweat began to bead his forehead.

Pinching the bridge of his nose he felt everything go dark around him, it was the sad realization that he was going to have to struggle throughout this entire camp that really got to him, made him feel sick to his stomach. *This is fucking impossible..* He pressed his cold palm against his ankle and winced at the swelling. *The pressure doesn't feel good anymore, it hurts.* He bit his lip and applied pressure before yanking his hand back at the rippling pain that travelled up his leg and through his body.

He sighed and looked up as the door to their room opened, Tadashi walking in with a happy smile, staring down at his phone and not seemingly paying attention. *Fuck- fuck!* Kei scrambled to shove his shoe back on biting his lip and squeezing his eyes shut as the pain rippled once again before he began to simply lose feeling to his foot in its entirety.

“Hey, Tsukki, I found thi-” Tadashi furrowed his brows, looking down at his friend. “Are.. you okay?” He tilted his head to the side. Kei pushed up his glasses and stood up.

“Yeah. What is it?” he walked over to him, ignoring each painful step that followed with these movements. Tadashi laughed, moving to show the blonde a picture of a dinosaur. “Yeah..?” Kei mumbled with furrowed brows, “What about him?”

“Which one is he?” Tadashi chuckled sheepishly. Due to their close proximity, they were shoulder to shoulder, arms touching and Tadashi’s smile felt almost distracting as he rested his head on Kei’s shoulder. A dangerous move, anyone would think so, but not with these two.

Kei crossed his arms and leaned his head in a bit, not mentioning Tadashi’s head on his shoulder. “Allosaurus...” He mumbled and nodded in agreement with himself. “You were just curious?” *Pretty sure he already knew about this one..* Kei arched a brow, glancing over at Tadashi who just seemed to smile wider.

“Ah, gomen Tsuki, but yeah.” He zoomed in on the picture and somehow happened to step even closer to the tall blonde without being asked to move back. He started talking again, but for some reason Kei couldn’t pay attention. He was looking down at Yam, his thoughts not on his foot or on his side, but on how many freckles Tadashi had. *Did he always have so many?* “Don’t you think?” Tadashi finished.

Kei blinked back in reality, suddenly more aware about how close Tadashi was and how there was very much a dinosaur in front of the two of them. “Oh.” He said dumbly, “Yeah, I agree with you.” He mumbled in hopes that was a good enough answer. Tadashi smiled brightly and pulled away.

“Sweet! Thanks, Tsuki!” He turned to leave before looking back at him, “We’re warming up, wanna walk to the gym together?” Tadashi invited, and honestly it was too good of an invitation to pass up.

Kei smiled softly, “Yeah.” He bit the inside of his cheek as they walked.

What was I thinking??

Tadashi stared down at his feet as he walked side by side with Kei. His freckled nose was scrunched up a bit in thought, *I can't believe I just put my head on his shoulder- but he didn't react to it?? Did he even notice?? Why didn't he say anything if he did?* He sighed quietly, *I guess it's a good thing he didn't say anything.. I wouldn't know how to react...*

Tadashi lifted his head a bit to look at his blonde best friend, stoic and tired looking as he always is, staring ahead with no care in the world. He only looked on to get into the gym. His arms swung a bit by his sides and every once in awhile he's adjust his glasses or yawn. Honestly, these small things that would go unnoticed by anyone else, never went through Tadashi.

He wasn't stupid, he knew these feelings all too well. He had only a few crushes during junior high but it was enough for him to know that this felt much stronger than any schoolyard crush that could go away at any moment. Tsuki was always there, and when he wasn't? He was nearby, and it was easy for Tadashi to close the distance between them. He wasn't insane enough to do anything more than simple hand brushes and bumping into each other sometimes. This was his first go at putting his head on his shoulder! It felt absolutely amazing!

His face flushed in thought, happy about the closeness that was between them. Tadashi knows he was head over heels for his best friend, and he had been that way for a long time- minuscule crushes couldn't keep his mind off of the blonde. *Is this healthy? To think about him so much?* He rubbed the back of his neck.

Tadashi's hand brushed against Kei's and he smiled again. *It feels nice, though. Thinking about him.*

It hurt to walk, it hurt to stand.

Kei was certain the inside of his lip was bleeding, there was no way it couldn't be at this point.

This is hell.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

Another short chapter, apologies

Suga couldn't wipe the smile off his face. His eyes shining, his entire aura radiating just warmth and happiness. He acted like the mom of the group, and he was. He was the one who gave the best advice, the most protective out of all of them, and the lightness that wash Daichi's harshness. He was the best out of all of them in a lot of people's opinions.

And while Suga was beaming brightly, a Daichi from across the court waved at him with a just as vibrant smile. A secret message was passed between the two, one only the two third years could read, and it radiated affection.

It wasn't a secret their closeness had become more strong and firm, and both of them seemed almost happier than they already did. A lot of people noticed- namely 5. Narita, Ennoshita, and Kinoshita, as well as Tadashi and Tanaka.

Although stoneheaded, Tanaka wasn't totally ignorant of his friends around him. Tadashi was one of the closest people with Suga off court, considering neither of them being on the starting line up. They talk on the sidelines when the times are appropriate, and sometimes there was a spared glance or a smile that lasted too long when the two looked at each other, and soon it wasn't hard to realize what had been going on.

They were still new, Daichi and Suga, not even having their first kiss until much recently on a date. It was a pleasant evening, in which Daichi took Suga's hand and said that it was about time they do something he should have done a long time before this. Although both of them were nervous, Daichi practically shaking out of his shoes, the team mom knew how to go about such a simple - yet heartwarming - kiss. It lasted for a few seconds, then there was a little encouragement by Suga to Daichi, happily claiming he was doing great, and they kissed again.

Ever since they had been walking home together, spending the nights at each other's houses, and going on more and more dates together.

Tsuki and I had gone on more dates together. Tadashi thought as he entered the gym and saw Suga's smile. *Well not d-dates just-* Tadashi clapped his hands on his face as a blush spread across his cheeks.

Kei and Tadashi had been friends for so long it was an irrefutable fact that they were the power duo outside of the court. *They* walked home together, *they* spent nights at each others houses very often, *they* went on a lot of "dates" together. And yet here they were.

Tadashi had voiced his frustration to Suga one time during practice, how he was scared that as his crush grows Tsukishima won't reciprocate and the friendship will be ruined. It's not that he was scared of loving Kei, quite the opposite, however their friendship was a sturdy wall he never wants knocked down.

"Don't think like that, Yams." Suga had smiled softly, *"If you think like that an opportunity will pass you by without you even realizing it."* He gently rubbed Tadashi's back as the freckled teen thought over all his options. *"You know Tsukishima the best out of all of us, don't doubt your abilities because you can read him like a book. A book!"* He smiled.

Tadashi chuckled, *"If you say so. I've just seen him reject so many people..."* He rubbed his arm, his chest tightening up at the idea of Kei ruthlessly and bluntly pushing him away. *"They didn't know him like I do, but I just.. I have my doubts. I don't know if I'm good enough.."* He sighed.

Suga slapped his back, hard, and scoffed, *"Don't say that! I don't want you thinking about that anymore, remember?"* He mumbled, supportively draping an arm over his shoulder, *"You have nothing to worry about, go get your boy."*

“Hey.. Tsuki, I’ve been meaning to ask you...” The freckled boy started, however when silenced followed his dramatic trail off he looked up at the blonde teen, who seemed to be lost in his own world. His face blank and expressionless, staring ahead in deep thought.

It... hurts.. Kei breathed heavily through his nose as they walked, *I need to ice it.* He spared a glance down at his foot. It throbbed painfully in the shoe, begging, pleading to be dealt with but he just....

I don't need it. Kei's chest tightened as his head clouded. *I can get through a stupid practice.* He winced, applying too much pressure in one of his footsteps and quickly limped to mask any discomfort before walking normally again. *Think about sleeping. Think about how nice it will be to lay down.*

Kei dug his fingernails into his palms and sighed shakily. Immense amounts of pain brought out the worst in people, but it felt more disdainful than his random bouts of low moments in which he can't leave his bed and Tadashi has to sleep over for Kei to even be able to sleep at all.

He feels bad about it, blames himself, but Yams never seems upset when he's asked to come over late at night, nor when Kei tosses and turns restlessly before slumping into the bed like a lifeless corpse.

They had a discussion about it once, Yamaguchi approaching the subject like he normally does. Blunt, up front, not taking any shit from Kei's unforgiving mind, and yet Kei doesn't feel himself get better at all, maybe for a week at most.

When Tadashi wasn't there during these times it was overwhelming. He'd curl up in his bed, his sheets soft against his skin, comfortable but not.. Enough. It's never enough. He could be in the perfect position to sleep and Kei's mind would talk to him about everything he did wrong. How undeserving he was of being Tadashi's friend. How horrible he was at volleyball, how all he is is mediocre.

Kei believes all of it, of course. The only person strong enough to change Kei's mind was Tadashi, but these difficult nights are the nights he decides to spare Yams of the bullshit Kei thinks about so much.

It was selfish of him to assume Tadashi just had time to waste on him, and honestly he thought the time they spent together was time in which his friend could be around someone much better than an asshole like him. However, Kei was glad he was there for him. He was glad for every time he reassured him of the progress he makes or how great he was doing - how awesome he was.

And maybe it was stupid, how his chest grows warm whenever he hears Tadashi specifically call him. Name or nickname, he didn't care, but it felt right whenever he said "Tsuki" or on more personal occasions, "Kei."

But as soon as the thoughts plagued his mind, suddenly his foot was numb and given the least attention by him. He didn't want to fall into his pits of self wallow, however this was all his fault. It was all on him, his stupid decisions to stop in the street or not pay attention to where he was going, and he knew for a fact that he was going to bring the team down.

That wasn't fair either, for them to have to tolerate his weakness, let alone have to bring it up to the coach and be short a player. They say it's better to try than not try at all, but Kei wasn't too sure this applied well. *I could sit out, would avoid any missteps and failures on my part... but they would be short a middle blocker. But if I do play, it could lead to more damage to the team and myself.*

Kei was starting to get fed up with his handicap. He bit his lip, eyes staring ahead, not noticing how Tadashi had stopped beside him and that they were now inside the gym,

watching the other teams warm up and practice.

Kuroo and Bokuto. His brain reminded himself, *They're gonna be all over you to practice blocking again.*

He subconsciously looked to the side, spotting the owl and the black haired douche. He grimaced internally before he felt a slight tug on his shirt. He furrowed his brows and looked down at Tadashi, finally snapping out of his thoughts.

“Yeah?” Kei arched a brow and Tadashi flushed.

“G-gomen, Tsuki, you were just out of it.” He waved his hand in front of Kei’s face to emphasize. “You with me know?” Yams grinned.

Kei rolled his eyes and grinned slightly, “Yeah, I’m with you.” he swatted Tadashi’s hand.

“Are you ready for the official beginning of camp?” Yams smiled.

“Absolutely not.” Kei snorted and walked with him over to the benches, “Are you?”

“Yes!” Tadashi scoffed and did circles with his dominant arm, “I’m gonna kick ass practicing my serves this time, you wait and see.” He grabbed the bicep of his arm and flexed goofily. Kei rolled his eyes again and grinned slightly.

“Can’t wait.”

Splash.

Kei threw water onto his face for the 7th time. The coldness dripped down his face, making his cheeks and nose go numb as he stood there, hunched over the sink in the bathroom. *I can't feel my leg.* He turned the water off and kept standing there, vision blurry, unable to focus on anything in front of him due to his glasses sitting to the side. After a few moments, though, he lifted his head.

His hair plastered against his forehead as if it was sweat and his face looked worse for wear, as if he had just run a mile with a broken foot, which was a fitting analogy in a way. Kei reached for his glasses and picked them up despite his wet hands, putting them on to look at the damage that was his expression. He grimaced, *I look so dead inside.* Kei frowned and looked down at his wet hands as they lounged against the sides of the sink.

Practice wasn't going well at all. He couldn't jump high, if he could even jump at all. Every landing he took was a shockwave of pain that pulsed up his calve, thigh, abdomen, and head, before going back down again. He had gotten enough shouts from coach Ukai, not to mention unhappy yells from Hinata... *It's not like I can help it.*

Kei bit his lip and looked up at his reflection angrily. *Am I just being pathetic? I can't jump, I can hardly run, everything i'm doing is pointless.* He curled his hands into fists and looked down at them. He thought it was stupid, how much he was struggling. There was a thin, almost unseeable line that seperated his now injured thinking to his regular thinking. How useless he was being on the court, how angry he was for not being able to tank through this simple hiccup. His side and foot ached and burned with every movement he endured.

This silent time he was getting was something he needed, but it did more damage mentally than the physical pain could ever.

He peeled himself away from the sink and dried his already nearly dry hands and left the bathroom.

The walk down the hall was painful, anything that required him to make movements made his toes curl and his breath hitch to form a whine, but he didn't let any uncomfortable noises get out, thankfully. How embarrassing would that be?

His foot thumped against the ground, causing Kei to gasp and stumble a bit in pain. It was white and hot, the pulsing and achiness of his tendons and joints in his foot. It almost felt like the next time his foot hit the ground, the skin would tear apart and he's gush blood onto the floor, as morbid as that sounds, it was the only accurate way he could describe the ripping sensation in his muscles.

Asahi spiked it, as they successfully completed their approach by gaining another point, but while the others cheered all Kei could really do was stand there stupidly, trying to regain himself. His side was screaming at him and it felt like his foot was having its drying breath. He was pushing himself too hard, something he was surprising himself by doing, and it wasn't a pro at all in this situation.

Maybe at other times, striving for more would enhance his performance, but at the moment he was struggling to survive whilst they play. He was on his last leg, funny enough, and everytime he would fight it would just broadcast it as him playing normally.

The rest of the games went on like this, until thankfully the day ended and they could go back to their beds. Kei needed sleep, *More like a coma*. He thought.

He would be ok.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Eating felt like a chore, the bruise on his side limiting on what he was able to eat and not eat. It wasn't that he could eat a lot, every swallow made his throat feel scratchy and when he could get something down it hurt his stomach. He doesn't eat a lot to begin with, and Kei has eaten much less in the past, but this time he *needed* the energy and strength.

He doesn't like to eat a lot. Kei doesn't have a point where he can feel pleasantly full, there's either too little or too much and the feeling of too much feels worse than too little in his mind. Everyone knows it, too. How he skimps on meals when his upperclassmen aren't looking, casually forgets to eat dinner when he gets home, and other instances he would accidentally have forgotten his bento in the fridge... though he would refuse any offers made by Yams to share a lunch.

Kei wasn't sensitive about his weight, he didn't care about keeping up an appearance, but at the same time it felt like he was. He didn't like to eat too much, that was all. It was something that always bothered him, even Tadashi had seemingly gotten used to his eating habits - whether or not he was happy about them, Kei wasn't sure.

Extra weight would weigh him down and make him feel worse about himself. That was a conclusion that theoretically stayed at the back of his mind whenever it was time to eat. Food was good, the food tasted good, but he just couldn't get along with it well. He was fine, though, he got plenty of nutrients and had enough energy to keep himself going.

With that out of the way, it almost hurt *not* to eat in this situation. Kei needed the extra food, he knew he did, but it felt nearly impossible to swallow. Yet, somehow, he was able to get down extras. He tried to ignore the shocked looks from his team and managers, how he went up for more and came back and ate it all, and in his own way he was shocked to find himself not at that overly full stage he usually comes to. It almost felt like he could eat more if he wanted to, which he did not. Once Kei had had enough of both his food and the prying eyes, he had gotten up for the baths.

Kei grimaced at his foot once he took his shoes and socks off. It looked horrible, black and blue, aching, and swollen. *I don't even want to think about what's happening under the skin.* He frowned, *I'm working it too hard.* His finger brushed over the aching skin tenderly and he hissed quietly under his breath. It was hard to get moments alone like this, especially with how many people were in the camp with him, so he was appreciating this moment to look at his tormented foot.

His peace was short lived, though, he wasn't about to spend 10 minutes touching on soft skin and watching his white hand print slowly dissipate a moment after he pulls away. The bath started and he got in, letting his body soak as other people came in and got ready, one being Yamaguchi. The heat on his foot felt like euphoria, or some dramatic shit like that. It felt really , *really* nice. The heat against his side was also nice, and his chest was filled with relief. Kei relaxed into the water, in his own head, whilst Yamaguchi talked and the other first years wreaked havoc.

He was the last one to get out, much to Yams' dismay, but it was better he got out when he was alone. Kei dried off, throwing his feet into socks and putting on his sleep wear. He brushed his hair and got ready, quick and easy. It felt nice to relax after working hard all day, but at the same time every step he took pained him all the same.

Tadashi frowned as he left the baths. *What's wrong with him? He usually always wants to take a quick bath to get to bed sooner..* Tadashi rubbed his arm as he walked down the hallway. Tadashi had always been shy when it came to bathing in front of other people, something Kei didn't understand that much when they were younger, but now that they were older they both had a mutual respect for each other's comforts. And while Tadashi grew up and became who he was now, he was a lot happier with himself despite the constant feelings of doubt when it came to his serves and his playing during games.

Tadashi was a confident person, don't get him wrong, but in a way he was like a magnet. He could be attached to another magnet and stick, but he was easily pulled apart from it just as easily as he stuck to it. Yams was a fighter, and it made him sad whenever he saw Kei try and stop fighting. Sometimes it even scared him.

Maybe that's why Tadashi was so attracted to him, he was enraptured by his unknowing best friend and he'd never felt happier when he was with him. Sometimes, Kei was the only thing that brought him happiness in general during the day. It felt weird if Kei *wasn't* there.

He stopped halfway down the hallway and turned his head, deciding he should wait. It didn't take long, and he was surprised to see Kei stumble out of the baths, an obvious limp but his face was blank and uncaring, which made Tadashi question. "Tsuki?"

"Yeah?" Kei looked up, brow arched. Yams rubbed his arm and frowned, now suddenly feeling stupid for having his concerns. That was another thing Tsukishima Kei was good at, limiting signs for people to read, and no matter how good Tadashi was reading them, he still felt like he was doing something incredibly wrong when he brought up something that looked or seemed simple.

"Are you okay?" He stepped forward, continuing, moving his hand to reach out to his blonde haired best friend. "I saw you st-stumble, or limp or something." He looked down at Kei's legs. He could hear Kei sigh, a deep and heavy one, one Tadashi has heard many times when something was going wrong. When something was heaving on Kei's shoulders, and it made Yams flinch, *I knew it*. And yet when Kei stepped forward he reassuringly grabbed Tadashi's extended hand and let both their hands drop to their sides before letting go.

"I am, lets just go to bed, ok?" Kei reassured, and it made Tadashi melt where he stood. His shoulder slouched and the freckled teen relaxed a bit hearing it. *Why does he always know what to say...* Tadashi thought, his eyes not moving from the ground where they now focused on. He squeezed his hand into his fist, savoring the lingering warmth of his hand in Kei's.

"Yeah, alright." Tadashi smiled and looked up at Kei, "But i'm gonna ask you the same question tomorrow, so watch out." He laughed and turned, walking down the hallway in front as Kei walked a few steps behind him. *Why can't he make this easy on me? I'm too nervous around him!* Tadashi scolded himself.

Nishinoya had subtly slid his enveloped confession under the covers of Asahi's bed set and waited in the hallway, a confident and sly grin plastered on his face. Obviously pleased with his quick thinking, he knew he wouldn't be able to hand it over face to face even though he had a good chance as Tsukishima had stated.

That was weird. Nishi thought for a second, *usually he doesn't let things up, despite how the other person feels.* He huffed and leaned against the wall. "What's that dude's problem.." he sighed. Nishinoya hadn't really talked one on one with Tsukishima, he couldn't read any of the signs Kei showed off but they did all get along. The team was unbreakable, and while Nishi knew he had friendships with certain people, he felt like he should reach out to the others more. He was their star libero, he should reach out more to those who were seemingly in their own corner and circle.

I've got enough on my plate. Nishi shook his head, sighing heavily through his nose and running a hand through his hair, *Or...* He smirked, *Tsukishima does blocking practice usually, I could practice with them while receiving.* Nishi pumped his fist at his awesome idea, but then there was the sudden thought on if Asahi returned his feelings and they started dating tonight-

Nishi's face flushed immediately at the happy thought of giving the ace a hug or hanging out alone with him over the camp days. *I can spend time with them later.* Nishi squished his own cheeks and gushed quietly at the idea of Asahi stammering to return his feelings. "I shouldn't be so hopeful, but it feels too good." He cooed quietly to himself, ignoring the odd looks he received from a few other players from the other teams looking at him oddly.

After a few minutes of patiently waiting, Asahi appeared from down the hall. Nishi's breath caught in his throat after the tall brunette walked into the room. He stood, stupidly, before his face went a deep red. "Holy.. shit... this is actually happening." He murmured to himself. The past few minutes he had been thinking about how to juggle team life with relationship life, giving himself a pep talk, and kicking himself in the butt for not doing this when they

weren't in Tokyo. Back home he could run if he got rejected, in Tokyo he's stuck there until the camp was over.

"Maybe it's not too late to get it back..." he murmured to himself, rubbing his face, overwhelmed with sudden anxiety. He loved feeling anxious, he was anxious during games, before games, but this felt way different. Outcomes on court could range from good to bad, no in between unless you look at the work that went into the games they played, but it felt like they were on the brink of losing and he doesn't know if he can get the blocked spike plummeting towards the ground. He bit his lip and covered his face.

There was something in Nishinoya that was hard to forget. Whether it be his intense personality, comedic sense, goofiness, Asahi wasn't totally sure. The 159.3 cm libero was a constant blemish in Asahi's mind, and honestly it was beautiful. He loved it.

The tall ace wasn't sure when he had started to feel a certain way towards Nishinoya, but he thinks it happened at some point when he got confronted by the short libero in the closet after losing to Date Tech. There was something about the fire in Nishi's eyes, something about how he refused to let Asahi give up, and the brunette still felt ashamed for leaving the team high and dry like that. With his neverending respect for Nishi, Asahi wholeheartedly wished he listened to him the first time and came back. He could have spared Nishi getting suspended after the vice principal accident, and they all could have grown stronger. He wouldn't have been so rusty after a month of skipping practice, and he would have been able to spend much more time with Nishi.

Was that all I really thought about? Asahi furrowed his brows as he walked down the hallway to get back to the rooms. *I know that wasn't on my mind at the time... but was it?* His stomach did flips and his shoulder slumped. He almost felt stupid for everything he did... Scratch that, he did feel incredibly stupid.

Yet, Nishi felt like a backbone to Asahi. It was as if there was a line the ace had made for himself, and not anyone could cross it, and if they did they could only cross it once, and yet

the libero had made it his mission to cross that line many, *many* times. And he did so successfully, much to Asahi's surprise. The ace was a soft spoken guy, who looked like a grown man, and Nishi was the total opposite, but for some reason it felt like exactly what he needed, and what he really wanted.

Asahi spotted Nishi standing in the hall with his hands on his face, a sure sign of 'i'm busy do not bother me'. And despite how much he wanted to tap on the short male's shoulder and clarify his health, Asahi continued into the room and decided he'd just ask later tonight when Nishi had calmed down from whatever fit he was having.

Asahi blushed softly, running a hand down his face and stopping it once his palm was over his mouth. No matter what stage Nishi was in, whether he was in a mood or if he was amped up, revved to the highest, he was adorable. Confident, alluring, admirable, and although embarrassed, Asahi would happily admit it to anyone - anyone who asked that is. And thankfully, no one has asked yet.

He took a seat on his bedding and paled when he felt himself crinkle something under his butt. He shifted off of it quickly and pulled the blanket back. It was an envelope, a bit squished due to Asahi's weight, but other than that looked fine. Asahi shifted a tad, sitting back where he originally parked himself, and opened the envelope.

Although not exactly knowing what to expect by opening it, the ace felt himself driven by overwhelming curiosity. "What if someone left this for someone else and got the bedding wrong??" He mumbled under his breath and looked around the room. The other team members chatted amongst themselves as they got ready for bed, and despite Asahi's growing paranoia that someone was watching him or staring at him, no one was. He sighed heavily, it was just him and the letter.

He pulled out the carefully folded paper and he immediately recognized the neat, yet somehow sloppy handwriting that belonged to Nishinoya. He wrote big and in all caps, but it was intelligible, which was always good. Asahi hunched a bit, putting his undivided attention into the letter, which he soon realized turned out to be a *confession*.

It was surprising, to say the least. Asahi didn't care about gender, and Nishinoya always seemed as straight as a board- how he talked about the girl's uniforms and how he talked about Kiyoko, he always tried to get girlfriend's. Maybe it was because Asahi was soft spoken and honest, a sweetheart, loving, and appreciative. He's a good teammate and a great friend, not to mention he's incredibly modest.

Neither of them knew why they liked each other, they were certain of themselves enough to not be confused by other opposing feelings. Nishi knew he was attracted to girls, he knew they were hot and he knew that he had no other pre-existing feelings directed at men. And yet somehow Asahi was different than any girl or guy that he had ever met, and he felt like a ball Nishi had to save from hitting the ground- and nothing would stop him. Whilst Asahi never thought about gender, but at the same time he had never dated anyone. He was a sweetie, he knew at some point he would find someone that liked him for who he was and he knew once he found them he'd like them all the same. He was a sappy guy, unsure of himself and bashful, but at the end of the day the only thing that mattered to him was who he made happy.

The letter was sloppy and all over the place, Nishi went from subject to subject, trying to scribble down his feelings onto paper and explain them, but they were unexplainable. Once Nishi realized that, Asahi realized, Nishi had written 'love is unpredictable and unexplainable, and you hit me like a spike to the face, and I wasn't ready for it, but it makes me excited to keep playing harder' and in a way Asahi found it sweet he was comparing it to volleyball, but found it even sweeter how he worded it all. He felt the same way, in all honesty, the struggling uncertainty and the confusion on who he thought he was, who Nishi thought he was, and who they thought they both were. They were thrown off guard, and it overjoyed Asahi that he felt this way, especially when it came to Nishi. It was trying something new, and they both seemed excited to branch out and see if things would work- and knowing how they got along, it would.

Asahi hauled himself off the bedding and put the letter back into the envelope, holding it close to his chest as he left the room and returned back into the hallway, where he saw Nishi looking a little worse for wear. "Nishi?" he murmured quietly and once he realized it wasn't loud enough to snap the libero out of his thoughts he muttered a "Yuu?" a little bit louder, but the poor guy was a mouse at this moment.

Nishinoya looked up in surprise and grew pale, looking down at the confession in Asahi's hands. Both of their faces were a dark red and they shared each other's nervousness. Neither of them had felt this strongly for another person before, and there was an unspoken fear that they didn't want to fuck anything up.

"Nishinoya." Asahi said more confidently. He needed to be the confident one at this moment, since Nishi didn't know of the returning feelings. He could feel the uncertainty dripping off of Yuu's aura and Asahi had the sudden feeling of needing to wipe it away. "I- your confession-

"It's stupid, yeah, kinda dumb." Nishi cut him off and crossed his arms, face unbearably hot and nearly glowing red. "I uh, I understand if you don't feel the same way- this is all so new for me..." He trailed off, now rubbing his upper arm with his thumb gingerly.

"It's okay, Nishi." Asahi chuckled, making Nishi stop nervously rubbing his arm. "I like you, too." He reassured quickly. It was out in the air, out in the open, and they both knew that they needed to talk about it now.

"C.. can we move slowly?" Nishi mumbled. "I want to do a lot with you, but I guess I'm not who I really thought I was, and I wanna experience things slowly, you know?" Nishi found himself trying to explain himself again, trying to explain his feelings.

"I wanna move slowly with you, too." Asahi nodded.

"Can I hug you?" Nishi stared up at Asahi with big eyes, how he usually does, and Asahi felt his heart melt. After a curt nod, Nishi's arms were wrapped around Asahi, with larger arms wrapped around him in return. Confused, yes, but they knew this relationship would work.

“And I don’t want to be outdone with my jump float, then I won’t be the pinch server, someone else will be.” Yamaguchi concluded his final point in his rant. *Tsuki hasn’t said much this whole time..* He thought quietly, looking up at his best friend as they walked. It, of course, wasn’t a surprise he hasn’t said much other than nodding curtly and giving small reassurances that he was- in fact- listening to what Tadashi had to say. It was enough for the pinch server, but now the silence felt odd for some reason, and it was an uncomfortable weight that pressed down on Yams’ shoulders he wanted to get rid of. “You know what I mean?”

Kei took a second before nodding, “You won’t be replaced as the pinch server, don’t worry about it.” Tadashi blinked in surprise. That was *far* more than he had expected after basically asking for that reassurance that Kei was paying attention, and suddenly the weight on his shoulders pressed down harder. He liked when Kei was nice and soft spoken towards him, he always craved the attention from him, but now it felt like a front in some way. It was as if he was being more honest with himself, yet his walls were higher than before; It was an unexplainable feeling, but it made Tadashi’s stomach churn.

Tadashi wasn’t dumb, far from it, he was driven and hard working, with deep confidence within himself he forgets to unleash and nurture now and again. He’s open to new things, and being the spear, he had to make sure his shield was ok.

But when it comes to that, Tadashi knows Kei isn’t stupid either. He knows how angry the blonde gets when he’s called names like that, how it makes him rewire his brain to think more helpful rather than destructive. Tadashi doesn’t believe Kei is an idiot, he doesn’t believe he’s stupid, but he believes saying those things are enough to drive his friend to bring him to his best potential, despite how much Kei insists on his uselessness on court, and how nothing he does matters; that he’s overshadowed by Hinata.

It almost makes him mad, knowing how little Kei thinks of himself, whilst Tadashi stands to the sides, deeply in love with the person Kei is. It hurts when Kei belittles himself, it hurts almost as if Yams himself is being insulted. He cares deeply about Kei’s well being, not only because he’s Yams’ crush, but because he’s his best friend, and he loves him as a best friend before he loves him as a crush.

A smug part of him brags quietly about how it makes their relationship even stronger than the strongest of relationships, but another part of him feels nervous because of the best friend love. As told before- he doesn't want to break the strong bond he has with Kei if Kei doesn't return Yams' feelings.

"Thanks, Tsuki." Yamaguchi smiled softly. Despite his complex feelings on the matter, the little things that showed Kei cared made Yam feel warm inside, and had his head beating a mile a minute. It was so relaxing, knowing he could just be himself around Kei, and that Kei wouldn't judge him for that. He truly loved their friendship, but the urge to hug the middle blocker was a strong one, too.

"You're welcome." Tsuki hummed softly as they turned into their room. Other people had already curled up for bed, tired, and Kei's throbbing foot and side yelled at the blonde to join them in the comforts of the covers.

The idea was nice, getting all comfortable, and when he did slip under the blanket it felt really nice- but he discovered one problem a few minutes later. His left foot throbbed, and his right side throbbed. Meaning, either side he lay on brought him indescribable pain, and a new hassle to deal with. He hated laying on his back and laying on his stomach after eating so much would probably make him feel sick, so he had to pick and choose his battles.

He settled for a position where he was facing Tadashi laying on his left side. His foot felt numb, pins and needles going up and down his leg. It made Kei worry that if he woke up in the morning his foot would be entirely black, and maybe need to get cut off worse case scenario, but the logical part of his mind reassured him it was highly improbable.

The wind pounded outside, whistling and howling in the air surrounding the dorms. How cold it sounded made Kei grateful he was protected indoors, stretched out under his blanket in an awkward position to keep himself comfortable.

Unlike Kei, who had his eyes closed, Tadashi's eyes were wide open, looking at the blonde haired teen in uncertainty. It felt like every few second Tsuki shifted uncomfortably, and it kept Tadashi up, thinking about the what-if's of Kei having a nightmare right now and he wouldn't even know.

And maybe that was the driving factor that made him get up and crawl under Tsuki's covers with him. It was sort of a split second decision, driven by wanting to soothe his friend of whatever was happening, so that he didn't have to shift around in discomfort every few minutes.

Yet the closeness didn't feel like enough. That he was just laying there, a few centimeters away from his best friend - and crush.

Kei was wide awake, despite his closed eyes. With the constant shifting, he was hopefully that eventually he'd stop tossing and turning and find a comfortable place to lay, and maybe, *just maybe*, fall asleep sometime soon. But that didn't happen, much to his dissatisfaction, but something else happened that made his mind go numb and everything feel soft. The blankets shifted and the knowing presence of Tadashi surrounded him in warmth, *why is he so warm?* Almost radiating comforting heat. It felt... really nice to have someone this close to him, much to his surprise.

What was even more surprising was when the few centimeters were closed and suddenly Tadashi was right up against him, curled into his side, tangling their legs together with his arm over Kei's wounded side. But it didn't hurt, their feet next to each other or Tadashi's arm wrapped around his side. It almost settled the constant tingling in his bruises, and once Yams had seemingly gotten comfortable enough, he buried his face into Tsukishima's chest.

What's... what the fuck is happening? Kei's brows furrowed slightly, prying his eyes open ever so slightly to look down at the freckled teen who had sweetly made himself comfortable in Kei's personal space. The line Kei had made was now crossed, and it wasn't that they hadn't been this close in the past- quite the opposite. Whenever Tadashi had felt down about

himself or cried, talking about his insecurities, Kei held him. When they were younger, they even fell asleep in the same bed during sleepovers sometimes. It felt so familiar, and it finally allowed Kei to settle his restlessness, thankfully.

In return to Tadashi's warm embrace, Kei wrapped his arms around the shorter male, bringing a hand up, finding his fingers at home in the darker hair of his friend. He held him there, and ignored the quiet gasp of surprise Tadashi let slip once Tsuki returned his hug. Kei knew Yams was awake, but apparently it wasn't the other way around. Unless it was, and Yams was surprised a sleeping Tsuki didn't immediately shove him away.

But at this point, they were both comfortable, and Tadashi was gonna savor this moment if it was the last thing he did. The wind was still beating against the walls as the two fell asleep in a room full of sleeping volleyball players.

Chapter End Notes

comments are always helpful

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Another short chapter

“Suga!!” Yamaguchi bellowed from across the gym, the freckled teen sprinted diligently. With each bounce on his feet he got a few steps closer to the silver haired setter, who was happily talking to Daichi at the moment. Although a little guilty to interrupt the conversation between the mom and dad of the team, he needed to get everything off his chest before he spontaneously combusted during a practice game. “Suga! You won’t believe what happened last night!”

Daichi heard Yamaguchi’s yelling and took the free time he had, although quickly dwindling, to plant a soft kiss against Suga’s temple before retreating back towards the court with Kinnoshita and Asahi. Suga chuckled softly and shook his head in amusement, before jumping back once Yamaguchi’s barreling footsteps stopped right beside him. Yams huffed for a second, standing for a second, staring at Suga with wide eyes as he breathed heavily, trying to recover from his brisk run.

“Yamaguchi? What’s u-”

“Tsukki and I *snuggled* last night.” Yamaguchi promptly cut Suga off once regaining his breath. His face was flushed, either from running or from embarrassment, but he looked over the moon about the fact. The silver head’s face lit up and he grabbed Tadashi’s shoulders.

“That’s awesome, Yama!” Suga beamed, but it was honestly hard to imagine or picture the two of them together like that, it was surprising to say the least. “How did it go? Tell me everything and leave out nothing.” Suga put his hands on his hips and smiled, such a mom.

"W-well- okay so he was tossing and turning a lot last night, y'know?"

"Sure, go on."

"And I thought if I was near him I could help if he was having any nightmares or something, bad dreams is the last thing any of us need." Tadashi continued to explain. "So I got under his blanket and hugged him, and he hugged me back! He didn't push me away or anything! He even ran his fingers through my hair!" Tadashi beamed. *He was so gentle about it.*

"Was he awake?" Sugs blinked in surprise. He didn't see most of what Tadashi saw in Tsukishima, so doubt was only natural.

"I didn't think so at first but I heard his breathing. When you're asleep you breathe slowly and it's all relaxed and shit, but he sounded hitched and normal- and if not normal he was breathing heavily." Tadashi shrugged, "That brings up something I'm less excited about.."

Suga's smile wavered at that last part. He was excited for Tadashi but the 180 just now made him nervous. "What is it?"

"I think Tsukki's hurt." Tadashi whispered to him. "I'm not totally sure, but he's been acting extra weird lately."

"..." Suga turned his head a bit and looked across the courts. Tsukishima was talking with Kuroo and Bokuto, seemingly uninterested in the owl and cat pair but couldn't pull away from them. "Why wouldn't he tell us? Are you sure? I feel like the logical side of him would make sure to tell us right away." He frowned, looking back at Tadashi whose face was smothered in worry.

"That's what I was thinking, it's wholly unlike him to not say anything if something's wrong. But I've seen him limping multiple times, he ate a ton last night, he's just been doing stuff he wouldn't normally do is all; It's really worrying me."

"Yeah.. Well if you're worried, I'm worried. I'll just ask Daichi and Tanaka to supervise him more carefully. If anything is wrong I don't want him overworking himself.."

"I don't either." Tadashi rubbed his arm quietly. *He'd probably beat himself up over it if he did get hurt.. He has worked through injuries before with the Shiratorizawa match and his finger.* Yams looked over the court again to make eye contact with Kei for a second before quickly looking away from the blonde. *But why try so hard at a camp if something is wrong?* Yama frowned.

"So I've been thinking about asking Kiyoko out on a date."

"And I care.. Why?" the blonde's brow twitched as Tanaka started an unwanted conversation with him.

"Well if I talk to Hinata he'll make a scene, Kageyama will say he's married to volleyball and has no idea how relationships work - or well *I* say he has no idea how relationships work - and you were the first person I saw besides Suga, who is busy." Ryo scoffed. "I kind of just need someone to bounce ideas off of and knowing you won't give two shits opens up many possibilities for what I can say."

Tsukishima's eyebrow twitched and he felt his whole body fall into a state of dread. Listening to this seemed almost as painful as his foot and side; speaking of which he needed to do something about that...

"Well anyway you heard that first part, right?"

"You want to date Kiyoko."

"Well actually I want to go on a date, huge difference, this is why we pay attention four eyes!" Tanaka raised his voice and snapped his fingers before crossing his arms. "I was thinking of a nice dinner, y'know? Take her out to eat? But I don't want to come on too strong.."

"Not that you don't already-"

"Hey shut the hell up!"

Kei huffed in irritation, "Take her to get some food then maybe go somewhere else. Ask her where she likes to hang out, her favorite place to eat. And don't be all fucking weird like you usually are."

Tanaka blinked in surprise, "I'm surprised, Tsukishima, I didn't take you as the romantic type."

"I'm not, you're bothering me."

"I'm not bothering you." Tanaka laughed, "But besides the point, thanks for the advice dude. I'm still kinda hesitant though because of like.. I don't know if Noya would be too keen with me trying to make a move on our goddess."

"You don't have to worry about that." Kei rolled his eyes.

"What?"

"Nishinoya won't care if you ask her out. In fact I think he'd be the best person to talk about this with." he gave Tanaka a look that read 'so leave me alone.'

"Wait wait wait- why do you say that?" Tanaka then did one of his signature intimidating looks, "You and Noya talk?"

"No." Kei pushed Tanaka's face away from him, angling it so that he had a clear view of Nishinoya and Asahi on the court talking. They were standing close together, both red-faced as Asahi continued to practice his serves. "She's all yours. Good luck." he then paused, "Speaking of which, where is she?"

Tanaka blinked in surprise and gave an accusatory look to Kei, "Are you insinuating-"

"She's our manager, dumbass. I need to talk to her about something."

"She's with Yachi." Tanaka stated blankly and huffed, crossing his arms before ruffling his hair, "I'm gonna go brag to Yuu, have fun with whatever you're doing you weirdo, and thanks for the advice!" And with that the second year scampered off to gossip with the libero.

Kei huffed, *What was even the point of that conversation?* He rolled his eyes and made way to where he had last seen Yachi. The two girls were outside chatting quietly amongst themselves and with the other managers. He almost felt bad about interrupting their conversation, but he had more problems he needed to handle.

Kei's foot still throbbed, and although his mind says he could handle it all in his own silence, his body begged for relief, he almost couldn't get his shoe on due to the swelling. He was

also worried about his foot healing wrong, it had only been a day since the accident but he didn't assess the damage enough, *and i'm not a doctor*, to come to a conclusion on how bad it was. But based on how much it hurt, it must be bad.

He sighed, this wasn't normal for him. Kei didn't care about sitting out, he didn't care if he missed something over an injury. *It's my own fault I got injured, anyway*. But something about the feeling of leaving the court after hurting his pinky finger left an impact he hasn't been able to shake yet. It was the idea that he could get through the week easily, and once he was done with it all then he could rest, then he could heal, but his plans were getting ruined by the pain.

During the Shiratorizawa match, he couldn't afford to waste any time on and off court, and he tanked through his injury very well, despite how much it hurt. But at the moment, Kei smothered the idea of sitting out because of his foot, at this moment it just wasn't an option for him, as stupid as he thought it was, or how other people might think it was, he just couldn't. He gets a taste of victory and sitting out felt like a crime.

He was gonna ice it, though, so he was grateful when Kiyoko handed him an ice pack without asking *too* many questions.

And there he was, secluded in the bathroom, holding an ice pack up to his foot. He wrapped it in a makeshift way, it was sloppy but got the job done trying to support it, and for a moment he took a second to appreciate his handiwork. Time seemed to slip by, and while his absence was probably noticeable but icing it felt too nice to stop. *Until the ice melts*. He promised himself.

The pain was starting to numb and the swelling had gone down, his shoe kept pressure on his foot but once he took it off again it was almost as if his foot just puffed out. Thankfully it subsided enough to get his foot back in the shoe, but it still scared him. He thought it was going ok.

But the door opened and things changed for a second. He lifted his legs immediately and held them out to press them against the door, it was nice to be tall. Unease settled in his stomach. He hasn't been gone for that long, he knows he hasn't, he might have let time get away from him but it couldn't have been more than 6 or 7 minutes- which to him wasn't long at all.

"Tsukishima?" of course it was Hinata's voice that made its way into the bathroom. Of course it was. "Hey Tsukishima! If you're in here wanna practice some blocks?? I need to practice!" a few bounces of a volleyball on the floor made Kei bite his lip in nervousness.

The ice pack he clutched in his hand started to burn because of how cold it was, it wasn't wrapped and his hand was bare too, it was a recipe for disaster. He shifted to get a better hold on it and thankfully the door shut before the ice pack crashed against the floor. Kei huffed and let his feet hit the ground again. He took pain pills, they seemed to be doing him ok, and icing it was helpful, so he should be good for the day.

'Good for the day' was an overstatement. It wasn't bad, but it wasn't good, either. It was mediocre, the pain and his playing, and he felt himself growing more and more fed up as he got one touch after one touch instead of blocking.

Not that one touch's were bad, but he couldn't get above the net as much as he wanted, jumping too high meant landing too hard. Bending his knees to lighten the landing was also a no go, when he tried his side erupted in pain and he quietly scolded himself for hardly icing it at all.

Nonetheless, they were doing okay during the set. They had been winning and playing fairly well, but Kei's mind was wholly elsewhere.

He felt like he should be thinking about what happened last night with Tadashi. *Why did I hug him back? Did he need me?* Kei frowned as he served the ball. *He must have thought I was asleep.. But he pressed on me in basically the perfect position.*

"Tsukishima- move back!"

It felt really nice, even better that the discomfort and pain was smothered..

"Tsukishima!"

Unlike Hinata, Kei did snap out of his thoughts in time. His body however, refused to move on command.

Kei looked up and jerked his arms forward to receive the ball, his legs standing as if his feet were in cement, and the next thing he knew a ball collided into his face and bounced up into the air. Completely knocked off guard, Kei fell back onto his ass while his team continued to get the next point. *Fuck.. What the fuck?*

"Oh no, Tsukki!" Bokuto and Tadashi seemingly yelped at the same time. He heard a whistle blow and he licked his lips, only to taste blood. He sniffled and brought his hand up to wipe it away, only to realize it was his nose that was gushing. *This is the last thing I needed.*

"Tsukishima, are you okay?" Daichi rushed over to him, helping him up, face laced with concern. *So much for not getting taken off the court.* Kei thought.

"Yeah.. I'm fine."

"Tsukki!!" Kei looked up, hearing Tadashi's wail from the sidelines. At that moment he noticed and realized that *everyone* was looking at him with concern, leaving him with a dumbstruck expression on his face as Daichi walked with him off the court and to the bench, where Tadashi was quick to meet up with him. "Tsukki..." Tadashi frowned.

Yachi squeaked and took out the first aid kit as Kei waved his hand dismissively at Yams. "I'm fine, Tadashi." he sighed softly in a reassuring voice that almost instantly set Yams at ease. "It's just a nosebleed."

Yachi helped him clean up a bit before she puffed her cheeks out, "Tsukishima! Why didn't you move? Daichi was even calling your name!"

"I wasn't thinking about it."

Probably the wrong choice of words, because once that was out he *knew* it bothered Yamaguchi. It wasn't like Tsukishima to be ditzy during a game, with everything he does he's always so focused in particular, so hearing that made Tadashi feel nervous.

"That's weird, are you feeling OK Tsukishima?" Yachi frowned, practically reading Yamaguchi's mind.

"Yeah, sorry." the blonde rubbed his face, and while this could mean anything to anyone, Tadashi could only see it as a way to rub away any stress on his face. To replace any look of concern or pain and replace it with a stoic, blank 'mask' as Tadashi likes to call it.

Something is very wrong. Tadashi realized sadly. *Is it physical..? Is he overthinking again?* There were too many possibilities and Tadashi only had a hint to one, but even with the limp it could be more mental than physical. *Kei gets sluggish when he gets a certain way...*

“Tadashi?” Yams looked up, suddenly realizing that he had totally zoned out for the second. Kei took the tissue out of his nose, and they all were pleased to see the bleeding had stopped, but as the blonde’s eyes went over the court Tadashi could see either a hint of regret or disdain - Yams wasn’t sure.

That’s not good...

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

a short chapter, might be edited and re-posted later

It's getting worse.

Kei gingerly touched his foot once again. The uphill runs were killing him, the jumping was killing him, *everything* was killing him. It doesn't take much to ignore the constant yelling of his teammates or coach Ukai when it came down to his lack of effort put into his playing, but when it was constant and completely out of his control how he dealt with things it got more and more frustrating.

He was used to it all, but his hopelessness was beginning to be replaced by anger. Angry at his lack of action, angry at his inability to do certain things now, anger. It felt horrible, almost as if he was a bystander, feeling the anger swell up in his body until it boiled in his throat. It made him want to scream, to yell about how stupid this was, how meaningless it was for him to continue to practice when he didn't want to. *And yet all I can think about is the court.*

Maybe it was the anger that led him to saying yes to Bokuto, Akaashi, and Kuroo.

"Hey skinny!" Kuroo called out to Tsukishima as the blonde walked down one of the paths to return to their rooms. It got his attention, sadly, and Kei looked up to be faced to face with

the owl and cat he dreaded running into today. This was another thing I did not need...

"You think you're gonna miss out on blocking with us just because you got nailed with my spike earlier?" Bokuto laughed at him for a second before frowning, "You're okay right? I hit pretty hard."

"I'm fine. For both the spike and blocking." Tsukishima grumbled, turning around to start walking again but stilled once he took a step on his swelling foot. He learned very quickly that once he started walking he could not stop until he reached his destination, that or he shouldn't stop moving it or else it would hurt once he started walking again. A rookie mistake, he thought to himself as he stopped moving abruptly. For Bokuto and Kuroo, however, his halting was an unspoken green light.

"Tsukishima." Akaashi walked over to him as the other two talked after only a couple minutes of spiking practice. "Are you alright?"

Kei blinked in surprise, was this because of getting hit earlier? They do realize i'm not still bleeding, right? "I'm fine, I should have backed up in order to recie-"

"That's not what I meant, sorry." Akaashi deadpanned in response, causing Kei to furrow his brows. This was probably the third time someone had asked him if he was alright, or doing okay in any way. "I was watching you block, you're not jumping as high as you used to, and your landing has been so shaky I was scared you'd topple over."

I was scared I would topple over, too. Kei thought bitterly to himself. Was he really that obvious? He foolishly spared a quick glance down at his foot before back up at Akaashi. He nodded nonetheless, "I'm fine. I'm sorry for my lackluster performance, though." He looked

over at the net and suddenly the pain in his body was eager to remind him that it indeed was still there.

“Why are you apologizing?” Akaashi raised a brow, “You’re just off your game is all, there’s nothing to apologize about.”

“I just felt the need.”

The black-haired setter rolled his eyes and sighed, “Well, on that topic are you ok? You haven’t been playing well at all this week - no offense - and I’m a little bit worried.” He spared a glance over at Bokuto and Kuroo before looking back at Kei, “I’m sure they are, too. Or, well, they would be if they were observant enough.”

Of course.. Kei thought bitterly to himself before nodding, “Yeah, I am. Don’t worry about it, I’ve just had my head in the clouds.” It was almost funny saying that, considering he was the tallest on his team. In fact, the disbelieving look on Akaashi could have made him laugh.

Akaashi’s face went from disbelieving to concerned, and by the time he bounced back from the comment Kei had already escaped to do some more mediocre blocking (As much as he didn’t want to.) *Tsukishima...* Akaashi frowned as he watched the blonde. *Something’s not right, I can’t be the only one seeing this.* He sighed, trotting after the troublesome three.

“Tsukishima! You can get higher than that!”

Shut up..

The throbbing in his foot couldn't persuade his mind from paying less attention to what the *King* was saying. And, to the surprise of no one, it was because of the throbbing that he was being spoken to anyway.

It was just another block, Kei couldn't plant his feet against the court well and his jump was underwhelming. It was hardly even a jump, despite his height he could only get his hands above the net. *It was more of a hop..* He thought bitterly with a sigh, and upon landing he was able to shift his weight better to avoid a more painful reaction. Kei grimaced and turned his head to the rambling, angry Kageyama.

Dull voice on muffled ears, as if cotton had settled next to his eardrums, to make it all as blank as he felt, but his anger that came from this irritation the black haired setter had put onto him felt like a justification. It's not that Kageyama knew what he was trying to deal with, and it wasn't like any of the other members knew what was happening either. But that didn't stop Kei from biting the inside of his cheek, sending a glare over at Kageyama, adding more fuel to the fire.

“What's your problem??” Tobia yelled at him, “If you don't care, get the hell off the court!” The shorter male was practically red. Still hands pointing at the net then back at him, but it wasn't more to Kei than background noise.

If I didn't care I would be off the court. Kei's grimace seemed to grow more intense and his jaw stiffened, and Yamaguchi from the sidelines couldn't help but furrow his brows in concern at just how his best friend was reacting to the situation. There was no sarcasm, there were no smirks, there was no reaction. Kei only felt his fist tighten and unclench.

“It's kinda scary...” Yamaguchi muttered, “When Tsuki doesn't respond, it makes me wonder what he's thinking.” He clarified once Suga and Hinata spared a confused glance at him. They all felt it, a rising tension. The freckled teen nervously rubbed his arms, and he hesitated at the idea of walking on court and trying to help things.

By the time Daichi finally opened his mouth to calm the situation, cool the tension, Kei finally decided to speak. The third year walked forward, hands extended to grab their shoulders, eyebrows twitching, before jerking his hands back and blinking in surprise.

“Shut the hell up, prick.” Kei growled, suddenly taking a step forward - *Ouch...* - and somehow looming over Kageyama despite their small height difference. The blonde’s hands were open and slack against his sides but his tall figure was tense from the pain in his side. He looked *pissed* and suddenly all of Karasuno was aware of how quiet the gym had gotten. Eyes on them, and Daichi quickly grabbed their shoulders and pushed them away from each other with an apology to the ref.

Kageyama looked dumbstruck, as if he was buffering, before sneering, “Play your part and I won’t get mad.” He looked away and prepared himself for the game to start again.

“What was that?” Hinata’s eyes were like saucers as he looked at the teams return to playing. “What just happened?” He rubbed the back of his neck, furrowed brows, sparing a glance at Nishinoya - who returned with a shrug - before staring up at Sugawara. It wasn’t reassuring that the third year looked troubled with crossed arms.

“.. I’m not.. Totally sure?” The gray haired teen mumbled before sighing and rubbing his face, “Now I’m certain something’s wrong, that was pretty out of character for Tsukishima.” He frowned, letting out a quiet and exasperated sigh as he watched the ball get served by Fukurodani. By that response, the worry seemed to spread to Hinata, and then to Ennoshita, and whoever else nearby who had heard.

“See?” Yamaguchi whined, “I don’t know what’s..” Tadashi paused, his eyes seeming to lock onto something. The freckled team completely zoned out, mouth snapping shut, while his dark eyes widened until large, his lips slightly agape in shock.

“Yamaguchi?”

“What happened? Hey Yama?” Hinata frowned, waving a hand in front of his face before both Suga and the ginger’s eyes shifted to where Tadashi was also looking.

And while Bokuto leapt into position, his arm pulled back like a rubber band, prepared to spike, Yamaguchi took in a large breath before the three started yelling to stop. The black and blue bruising peaking past the blonde’s sock sending them into a panic.

Not trying... Tsukishima raised his arms at the net as the ball was spiked back to Fukurodani. *What the hell... I’m doing my best. I’m doing what I can under the circumstances.* His breath wisped against the net. *110%* . He narrowed his eyes as he stepped hard to the side of where Bokuto had lined up. *This is bullshit.*

His leg screamed, his foot throbbing in pain at the added pressure, the concern Kei having had before leaving within a second of him bending down to jump. *I’ll kill the spike.* He narrowed his eyes, teeth digging in his cheek despite the taste of iron on his tongue, bitter and gross. *I’ll kill it, I’ll get off the court.* Bending his knees, the blonde leapt into the air once Bokuto was at his highest point.

There was a moment where Kei felt as if he was on a trampoline, and from the sidelines and from where his teammates stood on the court, he was much higher than he had ever previously gotten. Although, only by a few inches, he went beyond for this jump, he was airborne, for the lack of a better word. *It’s mine.*

He locked eyes with Bokuto, his intensity making the owl’s eyes widen in surprise before snapping down his arm. There was a quiet crack of the ball hitting against Tsukishima’s hands before colliding against the ground back on Fukurodani’s side, and for a second Kei felt a sense of accomplishment of blocking the ace before the panic of landing settled into his

stomach. Almost going in slow motion, he bent his knees a bit prematurely in panic before his feet smacked painfully into the ground, halting all motion.

Kei's bad foot buckled, the weight and the impact of hitting the ground caused his ankle to roll, and the blonde had to quickly regain his balance before falling, and he thankfully saved himself. *Fuck... Fuck!* His eyes widened at the net, his vision blurring at the pain in his side and foot, and he was suddenly acutely aware of how he couldn't grasp onto anything. While he was overwhelmed with confusion - he didn't feel any panic - the feeling of finally getting a break settled on Kei's shoulders. It lowered itself onto him, the feeling that his body needed a break, and who was he to not oblige.

“Tsuki!!”

“Tsukishima!”

“Asahi! Grab him!”

Huh? He didn't realize what giving himself a break at that moment really entailed. Kei's eyelids heavily lowered and he felt his body go into action. His consciousness jolted but any failsafe attempt was thrown out the window when his arms didn't move from his sides for him to grab anything, anything to keep him upright, he felt frozen. He was falling like a corpse. Almost as if he was half awake, his vision went from looking at the net to staring up at the ceiling before he felt arms around him, and suddenly Kei's vision went black.

Yamaguchi's eyes widened as he watched his best friend sway, before inevitably starting to fall. It felt like his heart had stopped, honestly, as soon as the blonde went backwards like a tree, or an ill-timed trust fall. It sent the freckled teen into a panic, and the yelling from Suga and Hinata next to him turned into static.

Thankfully Asahi heard Suga's cries, and being the one closest to Tsukishima, he was able to grab the tall blonde before hitting the ground, Nishinoya close behind him to help hold onto the tall teen so they could lower him to the ground. Daichi was quick to rush forward, Ukai and Takeda on the team captain's heels.

How long has his leg been hurting? Is it his leg?? Why didn't he say anything? Yamaguchi blinked back tears. *Why didn't he tell me?* He thought before a slap on the back bombarded him from his thoughts. Suga was saying something, he wasn't sure what, but the reminder of what was happening prompted the freckled teen to rush forward and check up on his blonde best friend.

"What happened?" Ukai barked as he crouched down next to Tsukishima, pressing his hand against the blonde's forehead whilst Asahi held him up. Yams quickly got on his knees next to the third year and as gently as he would allow himself scooted Tsukishima over so that Kei's head was on Yam's lap and his fingers were in his hair. Petrified. "Fuck- a fever." Ukai muttered as he pulled his hand back.

"Takeda, look at his foot-" Hinata bounced to the sides but was quickly pushed back by Nishinoya.

"Jeez dude don't crowd him." The libero said before glancing over at the blonde, curiously, before direction his attention down the tall leg to his black and blue splotched foot. "Oh.. wow.." Was all he could make out as Takeda quickly got to his knees and pulled down the blonde's sock.

"Holy shit.." Immediately, like a domino effect, questions were prompted. Tanaka watched worriedly, and Hinata couldn't help but bombard the coaches with questions upon seeing the

shape Tsukishima's foot was in.

“What happened??”

“Is that blood?!”

“When did this happen?”

Slightly swollen at the ankle, black and blue, with blood leaking from an unknown cut somewhere located on the top of the foot. It had drenched the sock at the toes and was slowly moving up, and with each tug at the shoe to get it off Kei flinched in his unconscious state. It made Yachi and Asahi gag, and even Kageyama had to look away from just how painful it looked.

Once his foot was completely bare, Kuroo and Bokuto were already hunting for first aid kits whilst they waited for the nurse, the blonde was starting to wake up from the ripping pain his foot emitted. His forehead started to bead sweat, and no matter how many times Yamaguchi mumbled “don't wake up” it was fruitless.

Slack gold eyes quietly opened, before Kei jerked in Yamaguchi's grip. Biting his lip and squeezing his eyes back shut. As the pain began to make itself more prominent, he even lashed his head, tossing off his already loose goggles to the side and hissing through his teeth.

“Tsuki! Stop moving!” Yamaguchi yelped as he tried to get a hold on him, wrapping his arms under the blonde's armpits hopefully, but before he could get a good enough grasp Ukai already had his hands on the blonde's shoulders while Takeda put a hand on his chest. “Tsuki.. I know it hurts just calm down-” The freckled teen paused once he saw Kei try and curl up into his side, trying to grasp fruitlessly, and once realizing it he jerked forward and pulled up the blonde's shirt to see a large bruise at his side near his stomach.

“Suckyshima!” Hinata wailed, “What is this?!” The ginger yelped, and despite the use of the not so great nickname the team could hear the worry and concern in his voice, and even Kageyama spared a worried glance at the blonde.

“Gah- hng-” The blonde bit his lip and dug his fingernails into his palms. His head lulled back again, his consciousness growing foggy. *What happened? I feel sick.* He grimaced, his facial features slowly slacking, and by the time he heard Kuroo say that the nurse was there Kei fell unconscious again.

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