

Characters:

Baihu: MYO-2952

Mateo: MYO-4082

Word Count: 1915

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*Thud, Thud, Thud.*

Baihu was focused on finishing up his training; pummeling a punching bag with both jabs and kicks as a fine sheen of sweat built up on his skin from the exertion. He was so, so tired already. He wanted to finish up quickly and go home! So focused on getting this training out of the way that he didn't notice that someone else had arrived in the gym - someone who seemed to be getting shown around by the gym's owner.

It wasn't until his name was called that he looked over - thinking that his training time was up and he was getting the sweet release of freedom now. Of course, that was just wishful thinking. Instead he got called over and introduced to the new guy, who was going to be helping out as a physical therapist.

He wiped his hands on a towel before gently offering it to other bun to shake. "Baihu," he stated in introduction.

Mateo watches Baihu with an interested gleam in their eyes. Oh. He would do very nicely.

They tilt their head slightly, watching the other train, crossing their arms as he talks to the coach. "He has a lot of potential-" he says with a small nod, unable to keep his eyes away from Baihu. "But he needs more discipline. He looks too much in a hurry to finish the set. Training like this needs time and dedication." The coach calls the other over and Mateo smiles politely, taking the other's hand to shake. "I'm Mateo. I'll be working with you from here on out. It's really nice to meet you."

Baihu had a gorgeous physique, he really was built for the ring. But in truth, he looked tired, and a little bored. "How long have you started the fights?"

Baihu nods his head and echoes back: "nice to meet you too." He glances between the owner and Mateo, wondering if that was all when Mateo captures his attention once more. His tail taps the ground as he tries to think before honestly answering, "a few years now?" Time is a blur to him, so he's not too sure. He looks at the coach for help and the other man just nods in agreement with him - that sounded about right. The owner had recruited him not too long after he had left the bunnery, that's for sure.

"Hmm. Interesting." they says, their tail swishes with interest. What a curious case. "Baihu, you're done with your sets aren't you? Do you mind if we get to work right now...? " they ask

sweetly. He motions for Baihu to come over and follow him along, the coach following right behind them as well.

They open the door to their break room and gestures for Baihu to come over and lie on the bed. "Tell me, do you drink enough water...? Get enough sleep...?" They ask, handing the other a towel.

Noo...Freedom was escaping him...

He didn't say this out loud, with only the slightest of furrows between his brows giving him away. On the plus side, his sets were over and he wasn't going to correct that statement! A win was a win.

"Mhm."

He simply but patiently answers each of Mattie's questions and goes along with whatever the two ask of him. He wipes the excess sweat off his neck and torso before lying down, eyes already going half-lidded with drowsiness. Mateo's voice was very pleasant, Baihu would give him that.

A pleasant minty smell fills the air as Mateo places some salve onto his hands, rubbing them together to spread it. He gently places his hands on either side of Baihu's temples before pressing downwards towards his jaw, then neck, reaching forward over his collarbones towards his shoulders. A cool prickly feeling washes over where Mateo's hands pass, as they continue to knead Baihu's muscles. "Hm. You've had a past injury here." he says, firmly working one of Baihu's arm in his hands, pulling it over his chest to stretch him.

To be completely honest, Mateo was more than astounded by Baihu's well... body. He's helped many athletes before but this guy was really different. It didn't help that he was cute too. Totally their type. Mateo makes sure not to stall when their hands run over Baihu's chest and abdomen, as they feel the coach's gaze still on them. They move on to his legs and bend his knee, pressing his leg downwards. "Do tell me if it hurts, and I'll be gentler~" Mateo offers.

The minty scent soothed Baihu's tiredness. Even his stiff muscles from being touched mellowed out before he was putty on Mateo's hands. He closed his eyes, partially to relax, but mostly just to avoid awkwardly staring at the ceiling or worse, risking making eye contact and seeming as if he was staring.

He couldn't help flicking the tip of his tail when minty cool hands passed over his chest and abdominals; the feeling very foreign and ticklish. He was surprised by Mateo's assessment, but really, he shouldn't be. This was the other bun's job after all. He winced at the stretch of muscle that had been strained but healed, but kept silent without complaint.

It was worse when it got to his knees. Although he did do warm up stretches diligently, his after-match care was perfunctory at best, and didn't help his ligaments much at all.

He nodded his head, and added a soft, "okay," in case Mateo didn't see, but honestly didn't plan to speak up even if it did hurt; not wanting to be a nuisance.

He pressed downwards a little further before placing Baihu's knee to the side to open up his thigh. Stay professional, he thought to himself, but Mateo really couldn't help but quickly scan Baihu's crotch. How badly he wanted to slip a hand into those trousers... Maybe one day, he could offer Baihu to unwind another way.

They do the same to Baihu's other leg before finishing up, patting his hands together to conclude the session. "Good. How are you feeling...? Its always important to stretch before and after your training." They say pleasantly.

A shiver ran up Baihu's spine and he couldn't tell if it was the sensitivity to touch, or maybe the breeze of air conditioning, but for some reason he thought his crotch felt cold for a second there. Puzzled, he opted to ignore it.

At Mateo's words, he sat up and stretched his limbs, feeling very light and refreshed - the usual after workout soreness greatly alleviated.

"Very good," Baihu responded, with a tinge of surprise in his tone. He nodded his head obediently and hopped down. "Thank you," he added, giving a shallow bow of appreciation and then glanced between the coach and Mateo again. Was he...dismissed now?

The coach nodded in satisfaction. "Welcome to the team doctor! We should celebrate your addition with a team dinner!" He stated the latter sentence loudly, rousing the excitement from the other gym members at the thought of a free meal.

"That sounds wonderful. It sounds like a great way to boost morale as well." They say, eyeing Baihu slightly. There was a good chance to get to know him through this, so Mateo would take all the chances they could get. "Ill leave you to your shower. Unless you need help with that too~" Mateo says, and although they thought themselves flirting, it could definitely look like they were teasing Baihu for being too dependent...

"No need to trouble you further,"

Baihu responded promptly. After all, he wasn't injured. Though, he couldn't help but feel there was something off about the way the doctor said that. He couldn't quite put his finger on how though.

With that, he trotted off to the showers, none the wiser.

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Once everyone was cleaned up and the gym tidied, everyone was shuffled off to a bbq joint - after all, what better way for athletes to end their day than with heaps of protein?

Everyone on the team was friendly enough to Mateo, which they definitely appreciated. They really only pressed on with casual conversation to get to know the team better, but of course his interest always ended up wandering towards one particular person.

"Hey." They say, sliding Baihu a beer. "Coach said for me to get you this." They hold their own up to cheers with Baihu. "Nervous for your big fight..? You're off to side here, and you've barely said a word all evening."

"Not nervous," Baihu answers, shaking his head. He is a little surprised that Mateo approached him though, what with the crowd of boisterous other buns clamoring to get to know him.

Worried that he might seem too standoffish, he picks out more food to fill Mateo's plate in exchange for the beer.

Baihu took a sip of the beer, using that time to try to cobble up some semblance of conversational skill. "I don't talk much...The others tease me for it," he adds, with a shrug.

Mateo watches him fill their plate. Ah. It was really too much. They put their hand gently on Baihu's wrist. "You've given me enough. Trust me, you need it more than I do" they tease, putting the beer to their lips.

"I've never been one for too many words either. Just the right amount I suppose. Besides, I do believe that actions speak louder than words" They take a sip of the beer and place it down. "Are you doing anything after this..?" They ask curiously.

Baihu nods along agreeably to Mateo's words. It's much easier to be a listener than a speaker, for him. But even keeping pace with Mateo's words didn't prepare him for the turn in conversation, and he couldn't help but glance sidelong at Mateo a little warily. "Not... too much?" He answers cautiously, already worried about getting dragged in for more work. He sips more of his beer, hoping intoxication would be the best preventative.

Mateo blinks. That was.. a very vague answer. Vague and a little disappointing as well. This man, was not much of a flirt. But maybe he was trying hard to get..?

No matter. Mateo would try again! Maybe his words... weren't getting through to him. "Come now, you don't do anything to... unwind..?" they ask, swishing the rest of the liquid in their mug. "Because... I'm not doing much after this either-" they suggest, looking up at Baihu from the side of their vision.

Baihu had the strangest feeling like Mateo was trying to put something down and he just wasn't picking up what that was. Something about the way they were stressing certain words? Or maybe they were just drunk and talking funny. Baihu felt like it would be rude to point it out though.

"Oh. Then...do you want to come back to my place?" Baihu offered hesitantly. "I can show you how I unwind?"

Another day, another stray.

Finally! Some progress. A small smile creeps on the side of their lip. "Sure, Baihu. I wouldn't mind that at a-

The coach suddenly comes forward, putting his arm around them both, insisting for Mattie to be introduced properly to all the team members. Unable to decline, Mattie waves a small bye to Baihu and mouths a small "See you later!" before getting dragged away.

Little did both parties know, this night was the introduction to a long and rather humorous process of misunderstandings and confusions that would soon define their relationship.