

Out For Karma: Naruto

Chapter 16: Aftermath

Konoha won.

Suna who allied itself with Oto had been defeated by the might of ninjas of the leaf. Less than a third of the village had been destroyed and the casualties were in the few hundreds. A very low number compared to the Kyubi's attack thirteen years prior. The massive counter attack had been led by Hiruzen who, while missing an arm, looked as fresh as ever with a spring in his step. Gai even said that the old Hokage was the symbol of youth in that moment, a comment that made the man chuckle when he heard about it later. To everyone, Hiruzen had appeared like the God of shinobi when he was in his prime. He was sure that Iwa and Kumo would revise any plan they had against Konoha knowing that despite his age he had no foot in the grave. Of course that was a big fat lie.

'Wasn't it for young Karin's kekkei genkai, I would have died.'

He kept quiet of course, his image of invincibility was more important to maintain than the truth of the matter. After everything calmed down, Hiruzen could say with his head held high that he was proud of every single villager, be they ninja or not for how they dealt with the assault. The only thing that soured the victory was his student's escape. He was quite bitter about it but it could have been worse so he wasn't complaining. His predecessors had been sealed and will remain so until Jiraiya or perhaps Riku could find a way to undo the Jutsu that Orochimaru used to call them back from the Pure Lands.

'Sensei, the Edo Tensei was your greatest mistake. Such an awful jutsu should never have seen the light of day. The dead should rest in peace in the pure lands for eternity.'

"I still don't understand how you can be alright, sensei. For Kami's sake, you lost an arm! You should be in the hospital!"

Turning his head to the side, Hiruzen saw his student entering his office by the window. Jiraiya liked to call it the 'ninja door'.

"I may be old, Jiraiya but I'm still awesome." Hiruzen replied with a knowing grin.

"Bah!" the tall white haired man grunted at the answer he got

"Some things are better left unknown. It was... a one time opportunity."

"... Sensei, you're sure you-"

“Yes, I’m fine. Never been better actually. Not since a decade or two at least.”

“You’re not gonna die or crash when whatever you did stops, right?”

“No. It’s permanent from what the doctor said. My body just healed so much that it went beyond its normal state and fixed some things. No more arthritis, which I’m glad for. It didn’t extend my life though which honestly I’m fine with. I can’t have a fight like yesterday anymore.”

“You’re not thinking of...”

“I’m..”

“Giving you the hat?”

“We certainly hope so.”

Looking up towards the office entrance, they saw Hiruzen’s old teammates coming in. As elders of the village Mitokado Homura and Utatane Koharu were part of the council. Their job was to advise the Hokage and make sure that the decisions the leader of the village took was in the best interest of the village. As such, after what happened the previous day they needed to speak with Hiruzen.

“Me? Did dementia finally get you, you old coots?”

“Always so rude towards your elders.”

“Maybe if you weren’t such an annoying hag I-”

“Jiraiya!” Hiruzen reprimanded his students.

“Sensei, you know I’m not fit to wear the hat! I have my spy network to take care of and I’m too much of a free spirit to sit behind a desk all day.”

“The alternative is Danzo.” said Homura in a contrite voice. While he and Koharu had been leaning more towards the missing third elder politically wise, they were well aware that him in power would spell disaster for Konoha. Shimura Danzo was an old warhawk who believed that peace was only possible after Konoha dominated all other villages through war. A notion that they did not share. Far from it.

“Absolutely not!” Hiruzen interjected vehemently.

“At least we all agree on that.” Koharu commented with a nod.

“I’m still not-”

"I wasn't thinking about you, Jiraiya." confessed Hiruzen.

"Who else?" inquired Homura.

"Kakashi? He's too busy being content in his depression and he doesn't have the strength."

"No, Tsunade."

"Are you mad?! She has not set foot in the village in twenty years!"

"Hiruzen! It's only thanks to you that she has not been put in the bingo book as a missing-nin!"

"That's a good idea, actually. She has the blood and the name. She's still popular, both among the old and the young." mused aloud Jiraiya.

"We don't even know where she is."

"I'll search for her." Jiraiya stated with conviction.

Homura and Koharu looked at each other and had a silent conversation. Once done they turned back to Jiraiya.

"A month. You have a month to find her and bring her back."

"If you don't, you take the hat."

"Fine!"

"Make it two." Hiruzen cut in. "I can still lead for a while though I'd like for her to deal with Suna and the chunin promotions. It will be a good test for her."

"Acceptable."

"I'm taking Naruto with me, sensei."

"Absolutely not! The jinchuriki must stay in the village at this crucial time." protested Koharu.

"I'll need him to convince her." explained Jiraiya, looking at his sensei. That wasn't enough for Homura however.

"Why? He's a dunce!"

“Had you taken the time to get to know him, you’d know that his personality is very close to-”

“Nawaki.” said Hiruzen in realization. “It’s a dangerous game you’re playing.”

“You know me sensei. Danger is my middle name.”

“I thought it was ‘idiot’.”

“I thought it was ‘pervert’.

Koharu’s words, unlike Homura’s, had stung a bit and Jiriya hung his head and muttered nasty words at her.

“Fine, take him with you. You’re going to have to wait though. Between the use of the Kyubi’s chakra and his fight against the Ichibi, he’s suffering from chakra exhaustion. The doctors say he will wake up during the day but should not do any strenuous activity for a couple more.”

“He’s awake, Hokage-sama.” Neko said as she appeared kneeling in front of Hiruzen. “And Genin Warudo is here.”

“Thank you, Neko. Let him in. Jiraiya...”

“I’m on my way.” said the white haired man as he got out through the window.

“Hiruzen, Warudo?”

“The stig...”

“I don’t care who his mother was or what she did and for who. If I’m still alive today it’s thanks to him. He has proven to be loyal to the village and that’s all that matters. I will not hear any nonsense about him as for the political stigma, I remind you that I’m stepping down so it won’t matter.”

Koharu took a deep breath and sighed deeply. “Very well. Though I’m offended that you think I would blame him for his mother’s deeds. He was a child of four at the time, of course he knew nothing about it. The villagers do though and that’s the problem but you’re right, you’re stepping down so it doesn’t really matter.”

At that moment Neko opened the door and let the dirty blonde genin enter the office. He nodded at her for a greeting then made his way towards the desk.

“Hokage-sama, Elders.” he greeted with his usual short but respectful bow. “What do you need, Hokage-sama?”

“Here.” Hiruzen opened the middle drawer of his desk and tossed him his book of seals. In the meantime Homura and Koharu took their leave. “I removed pages 88 and 89 for reasons I’m sure you understand.”

“I do. Just out of curiosity, do you have a way to release them?”

“Not yet and there are so many more important things to do that it’s on the backburner for a while. At least time is frozen in there so that won’t inconvenience them too much.”

“True. What about page 87?”

“87? What’s in it?”

“The sand siblings’ sensei.”

“You captured him?!” exclaimed Hiruzen in shock, wondering how Riku could have done so. Sure Riku was strong and definitely a chunin but the man was a jonin.

“That idiot stood right where I sealed Gaara in a barrier. I put it back on and dealt with him like I did the Oto-nins during my first A-rank.”

“That’s good. He’s an important jonin of Suna. Why though?”

“Because I believe he’s the one that killed Hayate-senpai.”

A wave of killing intent washed over the whole room. That gave Riku the confirmation that Neko was none other than Uzuki Yugao.

“**Neko.**” Hiruzen warned and the killing intent subsided. “Riku, why do you think that?”

“It’s a bit far-fetched but... at the time of the murder the only Suna-nins in the village were team Suna and their sensei. Out of the three siblings only Gaara had the power to win against senpai but from what I heard there was no sand left in the area. That left only...”

“Their sensei. Hum... It makes sense though it’s speculation.”

“Yes, but I’m sure some time with T&I will help find the truth. As far as Suna knows that man he’s MIA.”

Hiruzen nodded and took Page 87 that Riku handed to him. The genin also handed him page 78.

“What’s inside?”

“Seals that increase the nerves’ sensitivity by ten fold. A gift for T&I.”

"I see... I'll be sure to pass it along with their new prisoner."

"Anything else, Hokage-sama?"

"Yes. With everything going on, the promotions to chunin are delayed. However, yours will not. Konoha needs every shinobi out there to show that yesterday's battle didn't weaken us at all. Out of all the examinees you're the only one who is a sure thing. The second stage alone proved that you were ready for it. In any case, that's why I'm promoting you now."

Opening the drawer again, Hiruzen pulled out his own book of seals. He opened it to a page and unsealed a chunin jacket which he tossed to Riku who caught it.

"Congratulations. You deserved it."

"Thank you." Riku whispered looking at the jacket in his hands. "Would you mind... If I take a picture of you giving it to me?"

"Not at all."

Hiruzen stood and got around his desk. At the same time, Riku unsealed a polaroid and asked Neko if she could take two pictures. The female Anbu appeared from her hiding place, took the camera and aimed at Hiruzen and Riku holding the chunin jacket between them. After she handed him back the camera and the pictures (and disappeared). Riku gave one to Hiruzen.

"I'm going to call it: '*Getting promoted for disarming the Hokage.*'" which made Hiruzen snort on the spot.

"Get out of here! You've got work to do!" he ordered with an amused smile.

As soon as he was out of the Hokage's office, Riku wanted to put his new jacket on but decided against it. Instead he sealed it and went back to the cheap hotel he was staying in, his home having been destroyed during the attack. He didn't care much about it in truth. The only memories he had of it before being an orphan was his father killing himself. Not a great memory to remember which had the effect of Riku not caring about the house at all. It was just a place to sleep and eat and nothing more. What he cared about was his inability to offer Karin a place to live but that wasn't much of a problem with all the money she had made with her bets. Still that posed a problem. With how the villagers thought of him, finding a new place to live would be difficult and his stay at the hotel was only temporary. Sure, he had the money to buy a new house but he refused to pay twice or thrice the normal price for it because an asshole villager didn't like him. Already he had heard and seen people thinking that he had something to do with Orochimaru's attack on the village. As if because his mother had worked for the snake,

he was automatically working for him too. Such stupidity sickened him to no end but he couldn't really do anything about it. Not until he was Hokage.

When he arrived on the floor of his hotel Room he saw Karin knocking on his door. She was staying in the room next to him, courtesy of Anbu.

"Hello!" He greeted her warmly.

"Hello to you too, Riku. Where have you been?" she inquired after turning to the side to face him.

"I was summoned by the Hokage."

"Can I ask what for?"

"Sure. He just gave me back my book of seals, and gave me my chunin jacket."

"You got promoted!" she shouted with glee and went to hug him tightly for a whole two seconds before realizing what she had done. Quickly she disengaged with an embarrassed blush on her face.

"It's fine. It was quite nice. I Haven't gotten a hug since... Well, I wasn't an orphan yet. I won't mind many more." he replied with some cheek.

"In your dreams!" she shouted and tried to punch him but he dodged her fist without any problem.

"There is some development." he said solemnly, changing the mood drastically.

"In what regards?" she wondered worriedly.

"My house got destroyed. I can't host you anymore. Can't even host myself since it's just a pile of rubles now."

"Oh."

"Yes, oh. I don't think you'd have any problem finding yourself a palace with all the money you won."

"What about you?"

"I don't know. For now, it's the hotel until-..."

"Why? You won even more money than I did!"

“Oh! Well... I’m not really liked by the villagers for something my mother did. So either they refuse me service or increase the price to an indecent level and I refuse to give those assholes my money in return no matter how rich I am.”

“What did your... Can I even ask?”

“Sure. I’ve no problem with it. It’s been almost a decade so it’s water under the bridge. See... When I was four, my mother was caught working as a spy for Orochimaru.”

“Oh. And the villagers are blaming you for it? Like she was a spy so you’re a spy too?”

“Pretty much.” he replied with a shrug. “It’s mostly the civilians, though there are some retards in the shinobi corps too. Since they can’t make my mother pay, I’m the next best thing.”

“Self-righteous pricks then.”

“Yeah but don’t worry, the last one who acted like that towards me, I broke his hand and his nose, and dragged him in front of the Hokage. He got the right to visit the T&I division and a demotion.”

“Good! Got what they fucking deserve. I can’t believe that people...”

“There are idiots everywhere.”

“Well, I guess that settles it then. I’ll find a two bedroom flat and I’ll be hosting you.”

“That’s kind of you, Karin but I’m okay.”

“Nu-huh. The least I could do is offer you the same you offered me. That’s what friends do!”

Riku looked at her with an unreadable expression then smiled warmly.

“Thank you. It’s going to have to wait. Suna and Oto infiltrated the village through the residential district. I doubt there are many flats available and if there are, the price would be too high for what it’s worth, because of the need. I think it’s better if we stay at this hotel a bit. The prices increased too but not by much.”

“Good idea. Still, I’ll keep my eyes open for a good deal. Now I just have to find something to pass the time.”

“How so?” inquired a curious Riku.

“The hospital is overworked so the medic program has been put on hold. Since I can’t take missions outside the village I don’t really have anything to do.”

“With the day we had yesterday, I presume training is off the table...”

“Uh-huh.”

“Interested in fuinjutsu?”

“... Eh, why not. Your shurifui are really cool and the Hokage said that Uzumaki are usually good at seals.”

“In that case step inside, youngling. I will teach you the basics of the greatest shinobi art.” Riku said, opening the door to his room and inviting her in.

Chapter 17: From Mountain to Mountains Range

A couple days after his promotion, Riku went on a mission with Kotetsu and Izumo. The two best friends got tired of gate duty and since their favorite kid was now of the same rank as them, it was the perfect opportunity to get away from the village. They had to go to a small town called Tsuno to buy some materials for the reconstruction of Konoha. Because of its location Tsuno was more of a big warehouse than a town. Anything going somewhere in the Land of Fire went through that town. By tree hopping the trip would take two days, which gave them ample time to laze around because the materials were not there yet and would arrive at the end of the week.

When they reached their destination, Izumo and Kotetsu went their way and Riku, his, only because the latter wasn't interested in going to a hostess bar. While puberty had started a while ago for the young thirteen years old, he wasn't yet hormonally crazed by lust.

Instead he used his time to look around the town. There were more bars and shops and inns than actual houses or apartment buildings. He guessed that because nobody ever stayed for long in this transit town, it was more business oriented than community oriented. He saw plenty of different kinds of people including some that came from outside the Land of Fire if the white haired, dark skin pair of merchants discussing with a pale blond was any indication. From what he had learned at the academy, the odds were high that those merchants came from the land of Lightning. Of course merchants were not the only kind of people he came across. So far he counted thugs, mercenaries, repo-men, debt collectors, bookers and so many more.

After an hour or two strolling all around Tsuno, Riku decided to take a break and to enter an establishment that was both a bar and restaurant. The sun had begun to set and people, families from what Riku could see, were already in there. It wasn't big and there weren't many in his opinion but there were more than enough that only one free seat was left at the counter. Before anyone could come in and take it, Riku sat on the unoccupied stool. The bartender or waiter (Riku didn't know which it was in this kind of place) behind the counter greeted him and he went for a simple donburi. Everything would have been perfect if not for the person sitting on his left. The blond woman was

quite loud and clearly inebriated a bit. When she asked or rather shouted for another bottle of sake, he had had enough. Turning towards her, he called her out.

“Can you quiet down, plea-” He began to say with authority but froze mid sentence when he realized who that woman was. “You’re-” He didn’t finish this sentence either when the woman’s hand found itself against his mouth, prohibiting him from saying another word.

“Just my luck.” the blonde muttered under her breath. “Listen here, kid. You didn’t see me. I was never there. Okay? Do that and you won’t be going home on a stretcher. Got it?”

Riku, still a bit in shock with eyes bigger than the saucer the woman was using, nodded slowly. After a few more moments, the blonde woman removed her hand from his lips.

“Good boy.” was all she said and served herself another drink from the new bottle the bartender brought her.

“Eh... Could you...”

“What?!” the woman interrupted with irritation. All she wanted was to drink herself to oblivion after the bad day and bad luck she had.

“Sign my copy of *‘Medicinal plants and poison for dummies’*, and *‘Anatomy: How to not give yourself a surprise colonoscopy’* please?”

“...”

She looked at him with an unreadable face. He thought he saw a bit of surprise but also annoyance but he wasn’t sure. Her poker face was that good. After a moment of very awkward silence, she simply raised her hand, palm up.

“Gimme.”

Immediately and with giddiness, Riku pulled out his book of seal from his back pouch to unseal the two books he named, however it instantly disappeared from his hands for the woman’s. She opened it without even looking and made a gesture for a pen. When her eyes saw a seal on the very first page, she frowned in confusion.

“What’s this?”

“My book of seals. My copies are page 8.” Riku answered simply.

Curious, the blonde turned the pages one by one and went past the right page. It was slow at first but since on each page was a storage seal, albeit a bit different and more complex, the more pages she turned the faster she was.

“Is this thing a standard now?” she inquired a bit impressed by the ingenuity.

“No. Though the Hokage is testing it with Anbu. It probably will be standard soon.”

“Anbu? How do you know about that? You don’t look like Anbu to me. Too short and scrawny.”

“First off, I’m thirteen. Not short nor scrawny. Second, I was the one who created it and a bunch of other things for them, so I’m privy to this information.” he answered her with a frown of his own.

“You?” she asked with a bit of doubt in her voice. Riku simply nodded in confirmation.

She said nothing for a moment then went back to page 8 from which she activated the storage seal. Half a dozen books popped out. Picking them one by one to find the two she needed to sign, she noticed they were all medicine books. Every single one of them.

“Want to be a medic-nin, huh?”

“The best in the world. Then Hokage.”

She snorted when she heard that. For both goals. The first one implied he would become better than her, the second was just a joke in his opinion.

“Give up kid.” she began as she picked the pen he had given her and began to sign the books. “**I*am** the best medic in the world and Hokage is a job for fools. You’d only get an early death.”

“Surpassing you is not even a challenge. You’ve done nothing for the past twenty years and everyone else is either too dumb to do their own research, content with what you did or too busy worshiping your achievements. Lastly, Hokage is not a job for fools. It’s a job where at least you get to die for something greater than we are as individuals. Better that than live for nothing like you did for nearly half your life.”

Her words had irked him badly. Very badly. It was understandable, she was mocking his dreams. That was why his mouth ran before his brain could work. The blonde froze in the middle of putting her signature on the second book. Her body began to emit killing intent in waves. Each wave more potent than the previous one.

“You have one chance to take back your words, kid.” she said in a dark and threatening voice. The whole establishment became quiet when they all felt her murderous intent but her words made everyone bail out of there on the spot. Not like Riku and she even noticed. They were too focused on each other.

“Give it to someone who cares or lacks guts.”

She turned around a bit to face him. A silent staring contest began. Glare against glare. Anger meeting anger. Murder meeting murder. Finally, after what felt like an hour but was actually a minute, Riku struck first.

“Why are you even alive? What’s the point? From what I heard, you don’t see any future for you. Is it because you’re too much of a coward to off yourself? Or because you’re scared of what your loved one would-”

For the third time since the conversation began, Riku was interrupted mid sentence. This time however was different. The woman didn’t cut him off. No. She punched him right on the chest and sent him flying through the wall. He landed across the street and impacted the wall of another shop and fell to the ground face first.

‘Damn! She’s fast!’

He picked himself quickly despite the pain and spat the blood that had reached his mouth onto the ground.

“This kind of anger... Only truth can bring it out. Guess I touched a sore spo-.”

He jumped to the side, barely dodging an axe kick that left a small crater where he had just been standing. Later, with hindsight, he realized that he’d been quite lucky, because his legs were shaking quite a bit.

“You don’t know what you’re talking about, kid. You shouldn’t have run your mouth.”

“I know the old monkey sent your teammate to bring you back so you could wear the hat. I think he’s crazy. You’re clearly not suited for the job. You don’t care about anyone. Not even yours-”

This time he had to block. The punch came way faster. It was the only thing he could do, his legs not responding properly. With the hit he took to the chest he was unable to breath properly and steel himself. When her fist collided with his forearms he had quickly crossed defensively in front of him, they fractured. The one in front taking the most damage. Again he was sent flying. A few dozen feet backward this time. He still picked himself up or rather tried. With his broken arms that was difficult. Fortunately his blonde opponent helped him with that. Unfortunately it was by grabbing him by the throat.

“You really have a death wish.”

“I... don’t. But if I have to go, I’d go on my terms and true to myself.” was his reply and she began to squeeze his neck. “It’s funny. If you wish to... die so much... Hokage is the job for you... Heard they die... early. Your... family...’d be... proud. You’d... liv... for.. So... thing.” The harder she squeezed the harder it was for him to talk.

He knew he was about to die if he didn't do something. He didn't feel his legs anymore so kicking her in the womb area was out. That left only punching and he had one fractured arm and another with bones badly bruised. In a last ditch effort, he gathered medical chakra in the hand of the latter. His last chance was a jutsu that he had been working on in secret behind the Hokage's back. Only it wasn't working properly. The magnitude of what he wanted to do necessitated more knowledge and experience in the medical field to advance quickly and he didn't have that at the time. Beggars can't be choosers however and he went with this incomplete technique before it was too late. He was already losing consciousness because of the lack of air.

Raising his fist, he put it right in the middle of the woman's bountiful cleavage. There had been no strength behind it, he didn't have it anymore but that was alright. His jutsu didn't need strength, it wasn't about it. Unfortunately for him what he had hoped to happen didn't and as a result darkness took him.

The woman stopped squeezing however. Shocked by what he had tried to do. She had felt it. She had felt the medical chakra enter her body. It did something, she was sure of it but she didn't know what. It wasn't bad, that she could tell at the very least. Before she could try to find out what he had done exactly, her thoughts were interrupted.

"Riku?!" / "Tsunade-sama?!"

Turning to the side she saw three people, looking at her. The first was her own apprentice, Shizune. She was holding her pet pig Tonton in her arms, smothering him between her breasts and had looked of worry on her face. The other two were clearly chunin from Konoha from the symbol on their head protector. They were frozen on the spot. Jaws hitting the ground; eyes as big as saucers. A good example for the description of a shocked expression. They didn't even notice the ice cream they were holding melting and running down their hands.

Turning back to take a look at the unconscious dirty blonde in her hand, Senju Tsunade began to think again.

When Riku came to, the first thing he saw was the sky. Then the pain hit him like a brick in the face. His left arm was pulsing and the ache came and went. His torso felt the same. Confused, it took him a moment to remember that he got his ass handed to him.

'By Senju Fucking Tsunade! Holy Kami! I got destroyed without being able to do anything. First the old monkey, now her. I really have a long way to go. Still... Didn't think I'd met someone more beautiful than Yugao-chan. And those tits! Are they even real?! Did she use a secret jutsu to get them so big? They're the biggest pair I've ever seen! Even Anko's are not nearly as big and by a wide margin. Must be quite nice to rest your head on them. Probably the best pillows in the world. No contest. Speaking of pillows, where the hell am-'

“Oh, you’re awake.”

Tsunade’s face came out from nowhere above him, obstructing partly his view of the sky. Once again he thought she was the most beautiful woman he’s ever met.

“Yeah?”

“I thought you’d be sleeping for a few more hours. How do you feel?” she asked with a genuine smile that confused the shit out of him even more.

“... Alive?”

Tsunade frowned and Riku heard two familiar snorts. One came from the front the other from the back of him.

“You heard that Izumo? Kid got the beating of his life, must be hurting all over and all he says is ‘Alive’.”

“Must be a closet masochist.”

“AM NO-OWWW!!!”

Riku’s vehement but short protest died when the pain flared because of his outburst making his senpais laugh their ass off.

“You two, don’t agitate my patient.” Tsunade chastised with enough killing intent that the chunin stopped their cackling on the spot.

Riku noticed that he was moving, while laying down. He tried to sit up but was put back down by Tsunade.

“Don’t move.”

“Why? I can walk on my own.”

“It’s better if you don’t.”

“How come?”

Tsunade took a big tired breath and sighed.

“You didn’t notice but when you impacted the wall, you broke your ankle and a piece of it punctured the back of your right thigh. It’s healed but you should let it rest a bit more.”

The information made one of Riku’s eyebrows rise.

'I guess that's why my legs were all shaky and I couldn't move properly. I didn't even notice.' he thought then asked more general and important questions. "Where are we? What are we doing? Where are we going? And what about the mission?"

"Don't worry about the mission, kid. The client arrived a few days early and we sealed everything in your book."

"You sounded like I was asleep for days."

""

The utter silence he got was an answer in itself.

"WHAT THE OWW!"

This time the pain didn't come from his injuries but from Tsunade flicking his forehead with her forefinger. The head he tried to raise went immediately back down.

"Atop your broken ankle and injured thigh, you suffered from a fractured arm, a bruised one, four broken ribs, three more bruised and a concussion. You slept for three days." announced Tsunade but she didn't stop there. "Normally you would have been up in a day but your recent case of chakra exhaustion that went untreated made you sleep more." This time there was reproach in her tone which was going well with her frown. "What were you thinking about going on a mission so soon after that?"

Riku looked like a deer caught by surprise by a hunter. He did the only thing he could do at that moment with his mind blank. He blinked.

"What's it to you?"

"You're my patient."

"But why ? Last time I checked you were trying to kill me. Succeeding even."

"Yeah... Well..."

She suddenly became evasive and looked away. From the slight blush on her cheeks and her averting eyes, Riku almost thought that she was embarrassed. She was.

'There is no way I can tell him that I healed him because I want to know what he did to me! 7 cm in one night! They grew two cups! TWO! Nearly three! I had to buy new clothes to fit them!'

That had been quite a surprise for Tsunade when the morning after her altercation with Riku, she woke up feeling her chest constricted. Badly. When she took a look she saw her pride and joy nearly bursting from her open top. Her eyes nearly popped out of their

orbits when she saw that. Quickly, she got up and went for her backpack to take her measuring tape. After removing her top and measuring her bust thrice, she was in shock. Catching her bearings after a few moments of absence, she closed her eyes and used a diagnostic jutsu on her chest. The results had been baffling. The cells in this particular area had been somewhat rejuvenated and were dividing at a speed that only a young girl in the middle of puberty could have. In consequence, with more cells, her breasts became bigger. What horrified her even more was that they were not stopping their division. While she liked to boast of having the biggest breasts in the Elemental Nations, she didn't want them to grow even bigger. They were the perfect size for her frame and any more would make her look like a cow. She didn't want more back pain either, the ones she already had were more than enough. So without even thinking about it for a second more, she used the **Mystical Palm Technique** on herself to stop everything. It took a while to find a way to put an end to what was happening but she wasn't the greatest medic in the world for nothing. Others wouldn't even have succeeded at all.

Then, here and there, she decided to grill Riku about how he was able to do that once he woke up.

She had healed him after Shizune had given her a stern lecture about 'beating up kids even if what they say is upsetting'. Shizune was smart and knew what was the only thing that would set her off in a murdering rage. Once she had calmed down, she had thought back on what Riku told her. After asking some questions to the two chunins, who she realized were Riku's teammates, she began to really think about his words. He had been right. She had spent the last twenty years dealing with her loss and grief by drinking and gambling and it never did anything good for her. Sometimes numbing the pain a bit but that was it. If her boyfriend, Dan and her little brother, Nawaki, were still alive and could see her now... They'd be disappointed in her at best and ashamed at worst. The pain of losing them was still there. Still awful and cutting deep but she got used to it. She was just too focused, too immersed in her deplorable and miserable lifestyle to notice. In the early days, the only thing she wanted was to die. To join them, but she knew they wouldn't approve. Both of her and her actions if she went with it. Shizune had been a great help to avert and distract her away from those dark thoughts and she thanked Kami everyday for that. For her apprentice. However her wish to die never disappeared. Not really, it was always there buried deep.

Still, she realized that not only was she wasting the bit of life she had left away but Shizune's too. And that wasn't acceptable to her, especially regarding Shizune who she believed deserved better than the life she gave her. Always on the move, running away from debt collectors. No home, no friends. And most of all dealing with the tantrums of a woman old enough to be her mother. The thought of settling down somewhere had a new appeal at this realization.

The idea of taking the hat and becoming Hokage, however... It was still asinine to her. Sure her grand uncle Tobirama raised her to lead the clan and maybe one day to become Hokage but she never wanted the job. That was Dan and Nawaki's dream. Not

hers. Remembering that, she once again felt ashamed for mocking the prestigious job and indirectly their dream. Job that her grandfather and grand uncle got and died doing. Died not for nothing but for something greater than them. For others, for an ideal. For peace. For a place where children wouldn't be sent to war and die a dog's death. A place that had yet to succeed in doing so. A place that needed a new leader to make that dream come true or die trying. *'Something worth dying for, huh?'* she had thought. Her mind wandered again to the dirty blonde kid she had just fixed and his words. Becoming the Hokage would give her the opportunity to realize the dream of her loved ones. And with the job having a life expectancy lower than the average one of a ninja, she may very well get her wish to die fulfilled. At least it would be meaningful and she wouldn't have to be ashamed when she saw them again in the pure lands. She spent days mulling over the decision. She made her choice just as her debt collectors found her trail.

Looking back down at the young boy that turned her whole world upside down, she answered his questions. Not the one about her caring for him. This one she deflected.

"We're two days away from Tsuno. We're about to set camp for the night and we're going to Konoha."

Kotetsu and Izumo stopped walking and lowered the stretcher Riku was on. His book of seals in hands, they left him alone with Tsunade, to make camp, taking Shizune and Tonton with them.

"Konoha? Are you..."

"Yes." she replied quickly, cutting him off. While she had accepted to take on the job she didn't want to discuss it openly. She had not yet told Shizune and didn't know how to tell her.

"Oh. That's good I suppose." he said nonplussed.

"You don't seem very happy about it." She frowned at his reaction, expecting a more enthusiastic one.

"Well... If you become Hokage you won't have the time to take me as your apprentice among other things."

"My apprentice? What makes you think I would mentor you?" she asked in surprise at his ballsy statement.

"I'm good? Like really good? I can already use the **Mystical Palm Technique**. I learned it by myself without any help. Granted, I haven't used it on humans yet, for good reasons but the few tries on hurt wild animals had been mostly successful. My chakra control is almost perfect."

"Is that so?" She was amused at what she believed to be a lie. A thirteen years old boy learning to use the **Mystical Palm Technique** by himself without any help was ridiculous.

"Yes. Look."

He raised his hand and concentrated his chakra on it. It took a familiar green glow proving that he was telling the truth. Tsunade's jaw lowered in shock on the spot.

"No way!

"You should know better than anyone that it is the..."

"Yes! I can see that! I just don't believe you learned it by yourself!"

"You can ask Izumo-senpai and Kotetsu-senpai. They will tell you, it's true. I mean, where would I find someone willing to teach me shit?"

She didn't miss the bitterness in his voice. It was quite obvious, his facial expression too.

"What did you mean by that? I'm sure there are medic-nin or doctors that would..."

"Oh yeah, there are. Plenty of them ready to teach. Just not to me."

"...Why?" She didn't like what she was hearing and wanted to go to the bottom of this. Clearly he had an outstanding amount of talent and that someone would refuse to nurture it was wrong. *'Has Konoha changed for the worse?'*

"Well... My mom? She got caught spying for Orochimaru when I was four. That was a bit after his sick experiments were discovered and his defection. Of course as her son I was guilty too and the villagers mostly treated me as pariah in consequence. With Orochimaru launching an assault on the village a week ago..."

"They're thinking that you somehow helped him and their treatment got worse?" she ventured, sure of what she was thinking.

"Yeah... The fact that there were some of his spies in Konoha and among them one working at the hospital... You're kinda my only hope to ever become a full fledged medic. I mean sure... I can do it by myself, just like I became a shinobi but having someone to guide me would make things a bit easier. It also would be nice to have a teacher for once."

"Became a shinobi? How could you..."

"My instructors tried to sabotage me in favor of the last Uchiha. Then there was the genin team selection. I've been rookie of the year each year yet I was the one sent directly to the genin corps because no Jonin-sensei wanted me in their team. Was it not for Iruka-sensei -he's my last year instructor- sending Izumo-senpai and Kotetsu-senpai my way... And it's not been all roses. I still learned everything by myself because they didn't have much time for me. I just chose what to work on and asked them for advice. I know it sounds like I'm complaining about them but I'm truly not. They took me with them on missions giving me the opportunity to get experience and they found me a team for the chunin exam. I'm really grateful for that. It's just... It took the Hokage deciding to train me himself during the month before the last phase of the exam for me to finally have a proper teacher."

Tsunade really didn't like what she heard.

'He made chunin six months after graduating without any real help whatsoever? Sensei's little month of training notwithstanding? Either the standard became shit or he's a prodigy. Since sensei trained him himself, probably the latter but that beg to ask why no jonin took him in their team? They should be smart and mature enough to know that he's innocent of his mother's crimes. Especially when he was four. Are they cowards that cared about the political or societal aspect of the stigma he has on him? Did they really give up on a gem like him because of it? Damn it. I need to ask sensei about it. Clearly he's not just good at iryo ninjutsu if he trained him.'

"Which part of the vertebral canal will show secondary curves with concavity backwards?" she suddenly asked him out of the blue. It was a moderately difficult medical question because she didn't want to start small. If he wanted to be her apprentice and with the talent he displayed he should be able to answer in her opinion. She remembered the medical book he owned. After blinking for a moment in confusion, he gave her an answer.

"The cervical."

"Why?"

"These curves develop after birth and are associated with the body's adaptation to upright posture and bipedal locomotion. In consequence the cervical and lumbar regions of the vertebral canal show secondary curves, also known as lordotic curves, with concavity backwards. "

"The extracellular matrix and the cytoskeleton communicate across the cell membrane through what?"

"The integrins. They are transmembrane proteins that act as membrane receptors for extracellular matrix components."

"..."

She didn't say anything else. She didn't ask a third question. She just looked him in the eyes and he looked back, confident in his answers.

'Perhaps... I may take him under my wing?' she mused at the possibility. "What's the treatment for chakra poisoning?"

"Drag the invading and corrupting chakra out of the wound. It's inefficient and takes too much time out of the doctor or medic-nin."

"Oh? And what would you do?"

"Close off the tenketsu closest to the wound but not yet affected by the corrupting chakra. Either by using Juken or a seal. Once that's done using a seal on the area where the chakra is to absorb it. That way, the process is automatic and doesn't need a doc or a medic. They can treat another patient and preserve their chakra. You can also use a seal to purify the chakra instead.

"... That's clever." she admitted. "Such seals would be difficult to make but clever nonetheless.

Just as she was about to think further on the many more applications those kinds of seals could be used. Shizune came to her side.

"Tsunade-sama, the camp is ready." the raven haired woman warned and went back from where she came from.

Looking up, Tsunade saw two big tents that had been pitched perfectly and the two chunins were already cooking something without fire.

"Already? Wait, how are they..."

"Seals." Riku answered, cutting in.

"I made the tents myself. You just need to pull a wire and they pitch themselves. As for the fire, there is no need when you have a heating tag."

"...So that book of yours is not just a small toy." she stated looking down at him.

"No."

"How good are you at fuinjutsu?"

"Good enough for the Hokage to buy things from me in bulk for Anbu. I still have a long way to go before being a master though."

"You're full of surprise."

"I wouldn't be a good shinobi if I wasn't."

"True."

She looked at the scene before her. Shizune was helping Izumo by cutting vegetables while she threatened Kotetsu who was stirring the big pot and joking about having pork for dinner while looking at Tonton. It felt nostalgic and good to see her apprentice connecting with other people.

Riku for his part, with his vision limited upward, was focused on what took most of his view.

'Is it because of a different angle but aren't her boobs...'

His thought came to an end right there when Tsunade slapped her hand onto his mouth to stop him from talking. She gave him an annoying look which made him realize that once again he had voiced what he was thinking.

"**Yes.** They are. And it is your fault." she whispered. Riku's eyes grew wider in both shock and confusion at what she had just said. "The last jutsu you tried on me... It did this. What was it anyway? What were you trying to do?" she inquired removing her hand to let him speak.

"I... was trying my own version of Juken but with medical chakra? The idea was to... force the cells to divide continuously at a very fast rate prompting the body to... Well... Either bulge and explode or develop a fast acting cancer.

"... And you used it on me?!" she whispered in anger. That could have killed her had it worked as intended.

"For my defense, I was being choked to death! With a lack of oxygen I suppose I went for the only thing that would allow me to survive. You know, survival instinct kicking in? For what it's worth, I'm sorry. Still this... Result was not what I had in mind for the jutsu but again it's not ready to be used and very experimental."

"I can see that. It worked by the way. The cells divided slowly at first but kept going without stopping. The more time passed, the more the speed of the division increased. That's not all. The only reason it worked so fast to begin with was because the cells affected were rejuvenated. Beyond their normal state for their... Age."

"You mean... they kind of regressed? Went back to become cells from an earlier cycle?"

"Yes."

"How far?"

"Puberty."

"No way! That shouldn't be possible! Cells are on average replaced every 7 to 10 years! And their replacements are not supposed to live as long post our prime since we're aging and they're aging with us."

"I know! I don't understand it either!" she hissed.

Tsunade was a bit jealous of that accidental discovery. She spent years trying to find a way to remain young and her success was mixed. Then here came Riku. A thirteen years old brat that did what she tried to achieve for decades by accident.

"... I only have two ideas as to why that happened and they are as insane as the other." he muttered after a while.

"Which are?"

"First is... my chakra suddenly had time rewinding properties?" The deadpanned face he got from her pushed him to quickly say his other idea. "My chakra healed the cells on a deeper level? At their essence? When cells divide the information is... damaged, lost? Maybe it fixed that?"

Tsunade took a moment to contemplate this idea. As a medic, it had merit.

"So they did not regress but were healed properly... Hmm... That's possible. The knowledge on cells is still incomplete. Perhaps there exist even smaller components they are made of that we don't know about but are important to their development. That's worth doing some research on."

"... Does that mean I'm good enough for you to make me your apprentice?" Riku boldly asked.

The next Hokage looked down at him but said nothing and Riku interpreted it as a refusal.

"At least I tried. Maybe I can become richer by selling to noble ladies my breasts expanding jutsu? Boob expanding jutsu? Hills to mountains jutsu?" he muttered to himself and got a bonked on the head from Tsunade who snorted at his stupidity.

"Fine! I'm taking you under my tutelage. Be warned though, I won't show you any mercy. You either keep up or you keep out."

"Yes! I won't disappoint sensei! I'll give you my word!"

"I'll hold you to it."

With that agreement on apprenticeship, a comfy silence fell between them. For five whole seconds.

“You know...”

“Yes?”

“Now that I think about it. I never told anyone that I saw you and yet you are still sending me home on a stretcher.”

Tsunade froze a moment then remembered her words from when they met. She couldn't help herself and laughed. Her new apprentice was a special case and she knew her life had changed into something more chaotic.

Chapter 18: Back home

Not the first time for the last six months and always because Riku was involved, Hiruzen was smoking his pipe in silence. He didn't quite know what to make of the group standing in front of his desk.

On the left were Izumo and Kotetsu that had left for a mission a week earlier and should be back in the middle of this one. They were accompanied by Riku who was next to them, right in the middle of the group and was sporting a grin that said *'I did it again and I'm not even sorry one bit'*. Right next to him was perhaps the last person he thought he would see again in his office right at this moment. Orochimaru included. Tsunade looked as radiant and young as the last time he had seen her with perhaps an even bigger chest. He knew better than to let his eyes wander south to be sure of that. Her face was impassable but he knew her so well that it was clear to him she was annoyed. He thanked Kami for small mercies because a more than annoyed Tsunade was a destructive and yelling Tsunade and he wasn't in the mood for that. Lastly, next to his student was her apprentice. The last time he had seen her she was but a child. Now she was a beautiful woman holding a little pig with a pearl necklace, against her chest.

Predictably, Sarutobi Hiruzen blinked. Once, then twice.

“Boar.”

An Anbu with a tiger mask landed with a knee on the ground next to him. Without a word and without averting his eyes from the group, he used his only hand to pick his tobacco pouch and handed it to the masked Shinobi at his side. After a quick check he got his pouch back.

“Everything is in order, Hokage-sama.”

“No one switched my stash with drugs then.” he stated and Riku snorted. “Let me start with... Tsunade it's good to see you again after all this time. You too, Shizune.”

Tsunade didn't move a muscle and didn't show any acknowledgement of his greeting. Shizune on the other hand had a small smile on her face and nodded.

"Now... I'd like to know why the three of you are here so early? Granted I'm sure the one at fault is Riku, here-"

"Hey!"

"But I'd like to know how, in your mission to get material for the reconstruction for the village, you came back with my wayward student and her apprentice when I sent Jiraiya and Naruto to look for her?" he asked Izumo and Kotetsu, who didn't hesitate to throw their young friend under the cart.

"That's on Riku!"

"Yes. I established that already."

"Enough sensei! I'm back and that's all that-"

"She punched me into a coma and I guilt tripped her into coming back for the hat."

Riku's words instigated a very palpable silence in the room. Looking at Tsunade, who was both angry and remorseful, made Hiruzen think that it was the truth. Looking at Riku's teammates nodding slowly and Shizune's ashamed face confirmed it. He took a deep breath and spoke.

"Is the mission complete?" he asked the two older chunin who nodded. "Then you can go, we need those materials urgently."

Riku opened his book of seals and tore a few pages that he handed to his teammates who quickly left the office.

"Did you really come back to succeed me? On your own?" Hiruzen.

"Yes." she replied, rolling her eyes.

"After I punched her to the-"

This time it was the dirty blonde that was interrupted by the other one. Tsunade, fast as lightning, put her hand on his mouth to stop him from talking further. Knowing he wouldn't get an answer that way, Hiruzen turned his head to look at Shizune.

"I wasn't there when Tsunade-sama and Riku-san met and began fighting but I was there at the end. From what I understood, Riku-san said some harsh truths that... put Tsunade-sama back onto the right path?" she wasn't sure if she had worded her explanation correctly.

"I see." The old Hokage said then looked back at his two students. "In other words, he verbally kicked your ass prompting you to kick him physically but the damage had already been done. You thought deeply about what he said, agreed and decided to come back. Did I miss something?"

Tsunade released Riku and begrudgingly agreed. Or not.

"Does it matter?!"

"She came back because she was curious about my Boo-"

This Time Tsunade purely and simply knocked him out by hitting him behind the neck.

"Tsunade-sama!" exclaimed Shizune, putting down Tonton and rushing to Riku's aid.

Hiruzen didn't know if he should laugh, cry or reprimand her for that because after a month of teaching the young man, he knew that something embarrassing would have come out of his mouth. That's how Riku got introduced to the **One Thousand Years Of Death** in the first place to Neko's and Boar's hilarity.

"You seem quite familiar with him."

"Well... He is my apprentice." she replied with a shrug.

Hiruzen's eyes went wide open in shock at the news. He wondered how Riku could have not only pushed Tsunade to come back to the village with the intent on becoming the Godaime Hokage but also taking him as an apprentice and thus after she punched him into a coma.

'Remarkable. Nevertheless this is goo- no, this is great news! Riku finally has a teacher fit for him. I did everything I could but I'm more of a ninjutsu specialist than anything, something that Riku has not really much of interest in. Things couldn't go any better.'

While Shizune tried to revive Riku, Tsunade went around the desk to stand next to her sensei. She picked the empty sleeve that was hanging, rolled it and took a look at his stump.

"The cut was clean."

"Ninja wire embedded with wind chakra." he replied and she nodded in understanding.

"Good choice. I do wonder how come it's already healed without any scar tissues? I doubt someone has found a way to do that."

"You're correct. It's... a clan secret."

“The Sarutobi clan doesn’t have any med-”

“I never said it was a secret from my clan.”

Tsunade looked at him in silence for a moment then let go of the subject. It was touchy and she knew she shouldn’t pry further for information, she was from a clan herself after all.

“Regardless. This is perfect work. Whoever did this, you can thank them.”

“I did.”

“BOOBIE EXPANSION JUTSU!”

Breaking eye contact, both sensei and student turned their heads to look at the young chunin that was brought back to the world of the awake. Hiruzen, after decades as Hokage, had mastered the art of talking in a dignified manner. That is why his question was a graceful:

“... What?”

Tsunade sighed, then facepalmed with her hands and screamed into them.

“She wanted to know-”

“Riku.” she warned with a bit of killing intent and he shut up on the spot. Seeing that her sensei would not let it go, she sighed again and gave him a short explanation. “He used a deadly but experimental jutsu on me. It worked but not as fully intended with side effects and those... are the results.” she said, crossing her arms under her heavy breasts which put them forward on display.

“Ah. I wondered if they were... Nevermind. I understand why the name. That reminds me of a question that I forgot to ask you, Riku.”

“Yes, Hokage-sama?”

“How in Kami did you recreate my **Shuriken Shadow Clone Jutsu**?”

“He did what, now?!” a dumbfounded Tsunade exclaimed in shock.

“Oh, that? Well from the notes of the Nidaime on the Kage Bunshin you lend me. From them I simply... I guess I got the idea to tone down the amount of Yin chakra and dial up the amount of Yang chakra. It was difficult at first but once I realized that it was the opposite of how a genjutsu works it became easier. It may not sound like it but it was the easy part in truth. What was difficult was the series of hand seals to make it work. The hand sign for the shadow clone was not a good fit so I had to improvise. I needed a

strong base so I went with Ox, then stability so Dog, then strength but not explosive, so not Tiger but Dragon. After that Rat for the shadow element then another Dog to stabilize it then afterwards it was trials and errors and I ended up with Boar then Snake and finally Tiger.”

Both Tsunade and Hiruzen looked at him as if he had two heads. Everyone in the room did, in truth. Shizune and the Anbu guards hidden in the ceiling included. Hiruzen knew that Riku was a prodigy and perhaps a genius but he didn’t know how much until right this instant.

“What? Isn’t it your sequence? Did I get something wrong?” he asked in worry, not liking the looks he was getting.

“I’m going to demote the Jonin-senseis back to the academy, sensei.” Tsunade said, still looking at Riku.

“Good idea. Fools that they are.”

“Hum...”

“You got it right, Riku. This is the correct hand seals sequence of my jutsu. We’re just surprised that... well... you’re that knowledgeable about hand seals and yin and yang chakra. Especially the hands seals. What you know, that’s something many don’t and the few that do... It’s only because of years of experience in ninjutsu and jutsu creation.”

“... You’re serious?” asked the disbelieving chunin.

“Very.”

“B-but... I got that from looking at the basic jutsus of the academy and the genin level at the library! I just... compared the hand seals sequences of low level jutsus. That’s nothing impressive.”

“Not many have the mind to do that. In fact I believe you’re the only one I know who did it like that. I sure didn’t.” said Hiruzen chuckling. He was amused and also distressed at how simple Riku found out about something it took him years to understand.

“Me neither.” added Tsunade.

Riku looked at Hiruzen then at Tsunade to see if they were pulling his leg. They weren’t.

“Well, that was a fascinating tale. Now you should go, Tsunade and I need to discuss her new job.”

“Yes, Hokage-sama.” Riku replied with a bow and began to leave before turning back.

“Hum.. Sensei, where do we live?”

"We?" she asked in confusion.

"Well, aren't I your apprentice? Shouldn't I live with you?"

"No." she replied with a chuckle.

"Oh."

"You like me that much?" she teased.

"Not really. It's, just.. I guess I'll live at the hotel a bit more then." he replied with a shrug.

"The hotel? Why do you live there?" inquired Hiruzen.

"My house is now a pile of rubble. Anbu put Karin and I there when they picked us up after the assault, since we had nowhere to go. With the money she won during the exam she can easily find a more permanent place to stay but..."

"Shizune, bring him to the compound and give him a room."

"Yes, Tsunade-sama."

"I don't want to impose if it's not required of me to-"

"You shut up and you follow her." the next Hokage said with authority.

Riku simply nodded and followed his senpai outside but before that he turned back again.

"What happened to... page 87?"

"You were right. Neko dealt with it herself." Hiruzen answered.

"Good."

And with that Riku left the office for good this time, closing the door behind him.

"You seem to know about his logement problems. Care to share?" the Hokage asked his student.

"He told me about his mother and his treatment from the villagers. Since Orochimaru attacked the village..."

"They're even more suspicious of him if not down right blaming and treat him even more like shit." He finished with a tired and discontent sigh.

“Yes. I know he has the money for it but I think he believes that if he pays it would be accepting that they are right to treat him that way. I don't need to tell you how wrong it is sensei.”

“No, you do not. He's not the only one dealing with that. Uzumaki Naruto is suffering from the same thing unfortunately. I tried to do my best, but I'm only one tired old man with a village to run.”

“Uzumaki?” she perked at the name.

“The kyubi's jinchuriki. He left with Jiraiya to search for you. If you want to reconnect with very distant relatives there is also Uzumaki Karin. She's a new addition to the village. In fact I advise you to do so.”

He didn't say anything more but Tsunade understood that there was something more to that girl.

“Perhaps. When I have some free time.”

“She's Riku's only friend of his age, so it won't be difficult for you to meet her.”

Tsunade nodded and the conversation shifted to her new duties.

“What exactly am I getting myself into?”

“For now, not much. I'll still be there to pass the power over to you over time. You have two first tasks however. The first is dealing with Suna. Orochimaru, killed the Kazekage and impersonated him during the finals. Suna claims that they only followed his orders because they believed him to be Rasa. His body had been found near the border between Wind and River country.”

“What a load of bullshit. Such an operation takes time to prepare.”

“Indeed. Rasa probably made a deal with Orochimaru for the invasion and got both backstabbed and double crossed. The fact that they sneaked the ichibi's jinchuriki among the examinees of the chunin exam is proof enough. Though they can argue it was circumstantial. The jinchuriki's Jonin-sensei was well aware but we can't use him because... One since he's officially MIA he may be disavowed as a traitor to Suna in favor of Orochimaru and two... he's dead.”

“What happened?”

“Riku captured him because he believed he killed his friend Tokubetsu jonin, Gekko Hayata, during the month before the finals. He wanted justice.”

“Page 87?”

“Yes. Baki, that was his name, was sent to T&I and sang like a canary. The truth of the invasion was that Rasa was an asshole and didn’t get along with the Wind Daimyo who decided to outsource most missions to us.”

“Crashing Suna’s economy and prompting them to retaliate. Hoping that by crushing Konoha the Wind Daimyo would change his mind or simply increase Suna’s reputation in the Elemental Nations, meaning more clients. Orchimaru then entered the game and proposed an alliance.”

“That’s exactly it.”

“Why though? That’s not his style. A whole invasion just to kill you? It doesn’t sound like him.”

“I think that Konoha burning to the ground and my death were just a bonus and a distraction. His real objective was Uchiha Sasuke.”

“... The sharingan? Now his actions make sense. The greatest tool to learn jutsus could only interest him. Did he-”

“No. Not completely but there is worry. He put his cursed seal on Sasuke. Kakashi sealed it but it will only last as long as Sasuke refused to use his power. Considering his state of mind and recent events he’s a flight risk of the highest order.”

“Why? What happened? Besides the massacre, I mean.”

“His only goal is to kill his brother Itachi. It’s more than a goal in fact, it’s an obsession and I believe he will try anything to get power. Especially after his recent humiliation and losses.” he explained and seeing the look Tsunade was giving him explained further. “Sasuke was always compared to his prodigious brother and considered lesser thus he developed an inferiority complex. Unfortunately he is an Uchiha.”

“So supposedly better than anyone else giving him also a superiority complex.” Tsunade added, knowing well how the Uchiha were. They were the Senjus’, her clan, rivals after all.

“Yes, except Riku completely trashed him at every turn at the academy. He kept losing again a clanless orphan classmate. Even with the blatant help and sabotage from the instructors at the time, Sasuke was seen as the rookie of the year only in name. Now fast forward to the finals, Riku completely humiliated him. Your apprentice won the match in 16 seconds and by using the **One Thousand Years Of Death** as a final hit and before that it was a one sided Taijutsu onslaught.”

Tsunade snorted when she heard that and began to laugh.

“He really...?”

“Oh, yes. That was a glorious sight. Perfectly executed. Anyway, the day when Jiraiya and Naruto left, Itachi came back to the village, not for Sasuke but for Naruto.”

“The Kyubi?” she asked, already knowing that that was what the Uchiha had been after because that would be the only reason he was after Naruto. She just wanted confirmation.

“Yes. Since Naruto wasn’t there, he followed. Not before putting Kakashi into a coma with an unknown genjutsu. Sasuke learned of it and went in pursuit, leaving without authorization, and caught up. Itachi proceeded to humiliate him even further by easily beating him down and then putting him under the same genjutsu used on Kakashi, or so the doctors believe. Now after so many humiliations and proofs of how weak he was compared to others...”

“You think he might defect and join Orochimaru for a promise of power?”

“Yes.” he confirmed and then changed the subject. “We went off topic by a mile. Suna. It’s up to you to deal with them. I won’t help you in any way with that, except maybe, to give you information. See it as a test.”

“Great. Should I be thankful to clean up after you?”

“No, but it is what it is. Your second task will be perhaps more enjoyable. You are to determine which examinee of the Chunin exams earned their promotion or not.”

That made her groan. She didn’t want to watch hours upon hours of footage and read dozens of reports. Especially genins fighting.

“Don’t worry. Someone else already made very detailed reports and edited all the footage to only leave the essential.”

“Who in their right mind would do that? And didn’t you promote Riku?”

“Umino Iruka. He’s the fourth year academy instructor and takes his job seriously. After discovering some instructors weren’t doing their job properly he took upon himself the duty to watch the progress of the graduating students. Since ten of them participated in the Chunin Exams, he exceptionally included the few other examinees. As for Riku... Well with the situation the village is in we need all competent shinobi active. Riku earned his promotion during the second phase. The finals were just a formality. Everybody else either failed spectacularly or needs time to review their actions in my opinion. Don’t worry I’ll be there to help.”

She almost pouted and began to regret having accepted the job.

Chapter 19: Chunin or Not Chunin?

It was to unfamiliar surroundings that Riku woke up to. From the ceilings, the walls, the whole room which included the furniture, everything was unknown to him. It took him a few moments to remember that he was in one of the rooms of the Senju manor in the Senju compound. The building was a piece of Konoha history, made from the wood of the Shodaime's mokuton. It was there that the Shodai and then the Nidaime Hokage had lived. Where his own sensei, Tsunade, was born, raised and finally returned to. Riku felt honored to be there but also vindicated. He was now the apprentice of the greatest medic in the world, Godaime Hokage and from the most prestigious clan in the whole Element Nations. That was a big step in being recognized by the villagers as something else than his mother's son. Also a big step to show them that they were trash and he was morally superior. Lastly, a big step towards his dream of being Hokage. All Hokages after the Shodai had been related in some way. The Nidaime was Senju Hashirama's little brother, Sarutobi Hiruzen has been the Nidaime's student, Namikaze Minato was Jiraiya of the Sannin student who himself was student of the Sandaime and finally Senju Tsunade was the granddaughter of the Shodai, Grand-niece of the Nidaime and student of the Sandaime.

Being her disciple increased his chances to one day wear the hat significantly. Of course it wasn't a sure thing. He needed to work and train hard, become perhaps the strongest of the village and most importantly be useful. To think that a bit more than a month ago he had nothing and wasn't going anywhere made him realize that sometimes, you need a shit ton of luck.

Yawning, he got out of bed, went to the bathroom to wash his face, brush his teeth and empty his bladder. Once done he went back to his room, dressed for the day and left for his morning routine, leaving behind a shadow clone. The sun was barely rising which was perfect for him. At this time of the day he could scour Konoha without being bothered by the villagers' whispers or glares. When he came back, he immediately went to the kitchen to start breakfast. As the youngest and the new apprentice he was at the bottom of the hierarchy ladder and he believed (wrongly) that the chores were for him to do.

Shizune was the first to show up. After nearly twenty years of assisting Tsunade, getting up before her was so deeply ingrained in herself that she doubted she could wake up any later. She was pleasantly surprised to find Riku finishing to set the table while a clone of him was cooking breakfast. She didn't think twice about deciding that Tsunade having another apprentice was a good thing, understanding that many of her chores would not be hers to do anymore. She greeted Riku and sat down at the table. She patiently waited for the food by having a light conversation with her kohai. Mainly about where she went, what she did, what she experienced. She had no problem answering all the questions he had and was enjoying herself. When the clone was done cooking, he served first then himself and put the rest of the food under a bell to keep it warm for their sensei. Sensei who showed up ten minutes later.

"TSUNADE-SAMA!"

The yell of outrage and panic that Shizune let out, awakened completely the new Hokage.

“Y-yes?”

“We’re not alone anymore! Please dress appropriately!”

“What are-”

It took a second for Tsunade to realize what her oldest student meant. She was only wearing black panties and a dark green kimono. And nothing else. What was worse was that the kimono was wide open, presenting to the world half her breasts. It would have been the full package had they not been so big and thus straining the cloth, allowing it to barely hang on her very erect nipples but still presenting a part of her very pink areolas. All in front of Riku who was frozen in shock at the view, his face blushing like mad. Tsunade followed suit with her own blush but she quickly grabbed both sides of her kimono and closed it, putting one above the other.

‘They’re really the greatest in the world.’

Once again he voiced his thoughts unknowingly and once again consequence hit. This time it was a flick to the forehead and he fell backward with the chair, unconscious.

“TSUNADE-SAMA!” Shizune chastised.

“He deserved it!” the blonde protested pointing her finger at her new apprentice who was down for the count.

“He’s thirteen! His hormones are starting to act up! Of course his eyes would be dragged to your chest! Any healthy man’s eyes or boys’ would! If anything it’s your fault for being indecent!”

“It’s my home! I wear whatever I want!”

“Then don’t act like a blushing maid when Riku stares because you’re half naked! And don’t knock him out either! Now please sit down and eat your breakfast. It’s the least you could do after Riku worked hard on it.”

“He cooked it?” The Godaime asked in surprise, taking a seat at the table.

“Yes. He was up even before me for it.”

She began to eat the food, pancakes with honey, while Shizune woke Riku up. He was confused for a moment then remembered what had happened. Wisely he said nothing and went back to eat in silence. When everyone was done, Riku cleaned up the table and went to wash the dishes. In the meantime Tsunade and Shizune went to prepare

themselves to start the day. They had a lot to do. The latter was to go to the hospital and make a review of how well it was running (or not) for when Tsunade would pay a business visit. She had gone there the previous day but only for a short time. Just enough to pull Kakashi and Sasuke out of their coma. Everything else after that was dropped into the doctors' lap. For her part, the last Senju had to make a decision about Suna, the problem was, she needed to wait for their council to answer the terms of their village surrender so instead she would focus on the results of the chunin exam. She counted on Riku's advice, since he had been among the examinees and seemed to have a keen and honest eye.

"Where do you think you're going?" She asked, seeing Riku on his way to the front door just as she did so too.

"I was going to visit my friend to tell her that I found some place to live. We were supposed to room in before my house got destroyed then to room in once she found a place for herself."

"Nuh-huh. You're coming with me. I want your opinion on something."

"Sure, sensei." he replied and made a shadow clone which left to see Karin.

Tsunade didn't comment on it but found the use of the kage bunshin smart.

"Where to?"

"Sensei's office."

She barely gave him the location that she grabbed him by the back of his collar and shushined away to their destination. Despite the Senju compound being a bit remote from the Hokage Tower, they reach there in a minute. Five more and they were greeting Hiruzen who was drinking his morning tea. He welcomed them but was perplexed at Riku's presence.

"He was there among them. I want to hear his opinion more than any report or recommendation for Jonin sensei favoring their students or a simple proctor."

"Iruka's reports are very thorough." defend Hiruzen.

"I don't doubt you but more opinions is better. Besides It's a test for him."

"A test? Of his awareness?" the sandaime asked and got a nod in return. " Hmm.. The idea has some merit. The TV is here, the tapes there, and the report over here."

"Hmm, Sensei? What do you need my opinion on, exactly?"

"The other participants of the chunin exam." she replied nonchalantly, picking up the reports and sitting down on a chair.

"Don't you think I'd be a bit biased?"

"Yes, but that's the test. To see if you can be professional without emotionally involving yourself. It's a mandatory skill in many things including medic-nin. Now hurry up, we have a lot to see and very little time." she explained while opening a file.

"That'd go faster by using shadow clones." he commented off hand and took a seat next to her.

That tidbit he said made her stop her reading and raised her head from the file. Before she could say anything, Hiruzen interjected.

"Riku, this is a S-rank secret." he said with a frown.

"That *I* discovered and that sensei is entitled to as the next Hokage."

"That's... brilliant. Using shadow clones to... do whatever you need to do while doing something else. You came up with it?"

"He did. A second after I explained to him how it was used for recon." Hiruzen revealed and signaled the Anbu to get the hell out of the office, surprising Tsunade.

"I don't think that's that big of a secret that it needs to be S-rank or send away your guards."

"That part no. The part about using it to train faster, yes."

Tsunade froze. Digesting the information her sensei just shared. As it dawned on the possibilities of such a training method, she went slack jawed.

"Holy... That's more than brilliant! That's a complete cheat! How come uncle didn't think of it?! How come you didn't?!"

"Because we're one track morons. Sensei created it for recon and focused only on that and nothing else. He taught me that the jutsu was for recon only and I never questioned it. Still it's not for everyone. You need the chakra capacity to take full advantage of it. And while in theory each clone doubles your training time, since your chakra is equally divided it technically isn't true."

"Yeah... It may not be that much of a cheat but still-"

"There is a way to bypass that, you know?"

Both Tsunade and Hiruzen turned to Riku.

““There is?!””

“Yeah, chakra pills.”

“Chakra pills will damage your body in the long run because of the impurities in its components. It’s inefficient and dangerous.” the blonde woman replied.

“Not for the clones.”

You could hear a pin drop on the office with how thick the silence was. What Riku was suggesting was outrageous but so simple of a solution. Since clones were just that: clones, nobody ever thought of giving them something to eat because they don’t have that need. Both his interlocutors wanted to bash their heads against a wall for never thinking about it.

“Since they’re chakra constructs their chakra would be replenished but the side effects of the pills well... They won’t have any effect. And while a shadow clone comes to be with max chakra reserves and thus doesn’t have reserves to fill, it still uses chakra that the pill can recover. In theory a shadow clone, as long as it has chakra pills...”

“Could last forever.” whispered Tsunade in awe.

“The problem is the information recovery. That’s more dangerous than chakra exhaustion. I think you could overload your brain with no way to fix the damage. Well, unless you have a very fast healing rate.”

“Riku, how did you think of that? And why didn’t you tell me?” inquired Hiruzen.

“Oh! Well... The kage bunshin that was maintaining the barrier that day got the idea. So much happened and so fast since then that I... kind of forgot?” the young chunin replied sheepishly.

“Understandable.” nodded Hiruzen.

“Do you have other usage for them that nobody else thought about?” inquired Tsunade.

“How should I know what people didn’t think about?” he answered, tilting his head to the side in confusion.

“Humor us. Give us a list of what you thought.”

“Ookay. Hum... It’s just theories I never really tried but... You can use a shadow clone to make combination jutsu. Like you use wind but the clone fire to make a big inferno. Or if one of your arms is incapacitated use the clone’s hand to mould both’s chakra to

make a double jutsu. You could also store the clone inside a seal to use it later. With time your chakra reserves will fill up but you will still have a clone with half your chakra available. The problem with that is, what happens if your reserves are full and that the clone pops? Might be dangerous. Then there is using the clone with chakra pills to indefinitely hold a jutsu or a barrier. The information recoil would be insane the longer it lasts but I wonder if the experience is transferred back if the clone pops because he doesn't have chakra anymore. If it doesn't you just need to give him chakra exhaustion and you're safe. You can also use your clone as bait but that everyone does it in battle and finally use them to work faster, like we could do right now."

Once again both Tsunade and Hiruzen looked at him in silence. They exchange a look between them and a nod.

"Riku, I want you to mark all those ideas down for testing later."

"Yes, sensei."

"Now, let's start to work." she said and popped three shadow clones. One went to the TV to watch the footage and the two others picked a file.

After ten minutes she dispelled the ones reading, absorbing their information and began to ponder on it. Turning to Riku who had busied himself by discussing seals with Hiruzen, she finally asked for his evaluation.

"With whom do you want me to start?"

"Let's start with your own teammates. Akiyama Gou."

"Gou is a good Taijutsu specialist. He has a good head on his shoulders and is very observant. He's good at looking underneath the underneath but also at acting on the fly while not being the smartest around. He's a team player and while he doesn't speak much, when he believes he needs to speak up he does. He also started working on his range problem by learning a few long range water jutsu. They don't do much damage but they impair a lot giving him time to help a comrade, retreat or attack. I believe he deserved to be promoted."

"I agree. Young Gou did very well during the second phase of the exam and the finals. He may have lost against his own teammates but barely. His showing was excellent."

"I have here a recommendation from his own sensei, Hyuga Hinae, jonin Maito Gai and Shiranui Genma, the finals's proctor." she said, looking at the file of the genin but not knowing who the jonins were, hoping that Hiruzen would fill her in.

"Hinae is a jonin from the side branch of the Hyuga. She's good enough that the elders allowed her to learn some secret technique reserved for the main branch. She's highly regarded and trusted despite being a branch member by the whole clan thanks to her

skills as a kunoichi. Maito Gai is the foremost Taijutsu expert in the village. He's unable to use anything but Taijutsu and yet can compete with the likes of Hatake Kakashi without problem. He inherited from his father the technique of the Eight gates and pushed it further. Shiranui Genma is one of the former personal guards of Minato."

"I see. Tanaka Yuuna?"

"Ninjutsu specialist and area damage specialist thanks to her fire affinity. She's smarter than Gou and I believe the brain of her original team. Very cunning. She has no problem leading or advising the one who does. She doesn't hesitate to voice her opinion but follow the orders given even if they go against any plan she made. She added genjutsu to her arsenal and worked on her Taijutsu enough to not be helped against a specialist like her match against Gou and, from what I heard from him, Rock Lee who's also a Taijutsu specialist like Gai-san. What she can't defeat with Taijutsu she defeats it with genjutsu. She deserved to be promoted too." and Hiruzen nodded in agreement.

"The same Jonins recommend her too with the addition of Yuhi Kurenai."

"She's a recently promoted jonin but is known as the genjutsu mistress of Konoha. She's also an excellent jonin-sensei. Out of the three rookie teams, hers demonstrated the best and most balanced results, despite none of her students having any affinity for her specialty."

"Thank you, sensei. Let's continue with her team then."

"None of them are qualified." Riku simply answers before explaining himself. "Aburame Shino lacks the strength and the versatility. Hyuga Hinata lacks the leadership and the confidence in herself. Inuzuka Kiba is close in terms of strength but falls short. No brain to speak of and his leadership ability is... he's less of a leader and more of a tyrant because of his pack mindset. None of them reached the finals."

"That's a harsh evaluation of Kiba." noted Hiruzen.

"But not untrue."

"Indeed, yes."

"Team Gai?" inquired Tsunade.

"None of them either. What I saw of Tenten was a serious kunoichi who trained hard in throwing weapons... All kinds of them. She's really good but that's all she has. Her opponent in the preliminaries was a long range wind user who defeated her quickly. She has the mind but not a set of skills diverse enough. Rock Lee... I do not know. I missed his match but from the bit of his character. I think he's too excited to be a chunin. The 'Hit first then don't think later' type. Lastly, Hyuga Neji. In my opinion he should be sent back to the academy." Hiruzen snorted at that, confusing Tsunade.

“Why?”

“Superiority complex because of his clan name and talent in the gentle fist. Doesn’t know anything else. He’s... a defeatist and couldn’t bring the morale up of a team to save his life. A fatalist too and an arrogant one at that. He tried to murder his own cousin from the main branch during the second stage. That disqualifies him on the spot for the promotion. What’s worse is... he’s been a genin for over a year under a very competent jonin and yet he tries to kill a comrade out of a misplaced grudge. That’s why I believed he should be sent back to the Academy.”

“Let’s hope his defeat at your hands will help him change for the better.” the sandaime commented and Riku nodded.

“Alright... There is one recommendation from Gai and... No, that’s not one. That’s more of a note suggesting to not promote them. That’s weird.” she said with a creased brow.

“After the second stage I summoned Team Gai’s, 7’s, 8’s and 10’s jonins sensei to give them the results of an evaluation of their teams made by Iruka. Neji’s promotion had been discussed plenty. He was well aware it couldn’t happen.”

“Okay. Still weird but okay. Next is team 10.”

“Ugh... The worst of the rookie teams despite having the best teamwork. There is so much wrong individually that it’s beyond funny and downright sad. None have the strength or skills for chunin. Except for Shikamaru, none have the mind. Hard no for all of them.”

“Your son recommended him for a promotion, sensei.”

“My son is an idiot. Shikamaru is smart, yes, perhaps more than his father Shikaku. But he is useless if he doesn’t have the time to plan. The enemy won’t give it to him. Being insanely smart is not enough to make chunin. ”

“Team 7.”

“No to all of them too. Sasuke, shouldn’t even be a Shinobi. He’s Neji but worse because of his fragile ego. He has talent, yes, the skill and the mind too. He’s not eligible in my opinion because he has no self-control. All I needed to do to defeat him was to compare him to his brother and he would have lost all reason. Sakura should either be transferred to the intelligence division, the hospital or stopped being a kunoichi to stop embarrassing the village and kunoichis as a whole. She has a really good head on her shoulders and yet she’s an Uchiha fan girl who diets. She’s also physically abusive towards her teammate Naruto and only him. I know he’s annoying most of the time but that’s no reason. Finally Naruto...” Riku sighed thinking about him. “He shouldn’t have graduated in the first place so chunin? No, he’s way too immature for that. He only knows the academy three and the kage bunshin instead of the regular one

for Ninjutsu. Probably because of his insane chakra reserves and his poor chakra control. His Taijutsu is mostly inexistant, he's just... brawling."

"Anything to add, sensei?"

"I disagree with Naruto not being fit to be a genin but otherwise, no."

"Finally Uzumaki Karin."

"Huh..." was all Riku said, thinking about it. "Difficult to say. She's smart. Very smart. Despite not being a fighter she used her head to win against Temari who I believe is a chunin level kunoichi. Karin is very competent as a support but again she's not a fighter so... I don't know. I'd say no. She needs to get stronger first and I'm not counting the fact that she just joined the village from Kusa. It will take a while before she can be trusted to be chunin and potentially lead a team. I don't see the latter happening though. I think she'd do better as a medic-nin or working in the biology section of the R&D. Her being chunin or not wouldn't matter then."

Riku's evaluation stopped there and Tsunade nodded. She closed the file she had taken some notes in during the conversation, turned towards the Tv and dispelled her clone. Once again she took a moment to deal with the knowledge and suddenly laugh her ass off.

"Oh my god! 'Sweeping someone off their feet' after cutting them off?! Really?" she said with amusement, shaking her head. "Not as funny as the way you dealt with the Uchiha though. That would have made uncle crack a smile."

"Oh, definitely and that's quite a feat." commented Hiruzen with a smile of his own.

"Anything else, sensei?"

"Nah. You're free until my coronation ceremony. By then I will have learned the job and dealt with everything that needs to be dealt with. We'll start your practical training, then."

"What about theoriti-." Was cut off by Tsunade tossing him a scroll, which he caught.

"You have a week to learn everything in the books that's in there. You'd be quizzed. I'll accept no less than an 90%"

"...As soon as I can, I'm making you a book of seals." he said. He thanked her, bowed to Hiruzen and took his leave.

"Is it really that useful?" she inquired, turning to her sensei.

"Look at the Anbu reports and you'll see but yes."

Chapter 20: Godaime Hokage

“Tsunade! You can’t take him as your apprentice!” Koharu almost yelled at the new Godaime Hokage. Beside her was Homura nodding in agreement while Hiruzen sat next to his student. Amused.

“Of course I can. I did in fact.” the blonde woman replied with a glare and a frown. She never liked people telling her what to do, especially when she was the boss. Like now.

“What Koharu meant is that you shouldn’t.” Homura tried to diffuse the situation.

Both elders had been shocked to see Warudo Riku next to Shizune behind Tsunade half an hour earlier when Hiruzen put the hat on her head in front of the whole village.

“I don’t see why not. And don’t tell me it’s because of what the villagers think of him, please. My family name alone is enough to shake off any bad press because of his situation.”

“Tsunade-” Koharu tried again.

“Look. That kid? He’s a genius. A real one that you only see once in a generation if not more. We can’t leave him alone or we’re going to lose him and we can’t miss on such potential. We already wasted enough of them between Orochimaru, Kakashi and Itachi. No more. So if a bit of bad publicity is the price to pay for such an excellent asset then so be it.”

“... Genius?” inquired a confused Homura.

Both elders had watched the finals of course and saw Riku as a good and talented shinobi but nothing that demonstrated he was a prodigy of the likes of the names Tsunade had given. Noticing they had no clue about Riku at all, the Hokage opened her drawer, picked a very thick file and tossed it across her desk. Curious, Koharu picked it up and opened it, Homura getting closer to have a look too. After a few minutes and reading pages after pages, they looked at her.

“Is this accurate?” she asked with all the seriousness she was known for.

“Ye-.”

Tsunade’s answer was drowned by the door of her office bursting open revealing the topic of their conversation.

‘Speak of the devil...’ she thought.

“Sandaime-sa-. Oh! ...Eh! Sensei, Elders. Sorry for the interruption but I need to speak with Sandaime-sama urgently.”

“Can it wait?” inquired Tsunade, not wanting to deal with her sensei’s teammate alone.

“Eh... Maybe? Depends. Is the topic more important than Sandaime-sama being able to use two arms again?”

““““WHAT?!”””””

The united shout of the whole room was so loud that Riku recoiled a bit.

“You found a way to heal Hiruzen’s arm?” asked Koharu.

“Not exactly. It’s three ideas to test to give him an arm again but I’m sure one of them will work and I need him to do it because well... he’s the one missing an arm.”

“Come here.” Tsunade ordered. “close the door.”

Riku obeyed and slowly advanced forward up to his sensei’s desk.

“Are you going to spout ideas worth an S-rank label in terms of secrets?” she inquired.

“Eh... Probably?”

The blonde woman held his gaze for a moment and sighed. She dismissed the Anbu and activated the lock down protocol of the office by pumping chakra onto the seal under the desk.

“Take a chair and go ahead.”

“Wouldn’t the elders need-”

“We’re fine.” cut in Koharu.

“We may not be that young but we’re not so old that we need to sit after standing for a few minutes.”

“Alright then.”

He pulled a chair from the side of the room and sat next to Tsunade. The elders were giving him the creeps.

“Soooo. First idea is to create a partial Kage Bunshin or rather create a chakra construct of the same type but of your arm. That will be difficult and it may not be fully functional but it’s worth a shot. I mean... it’s not like you’re an active shinobi anymore so for day to day life it should be enough.”

“That’s... a very good idea. Unfortunately I would need an actual left arm to clone.”

“There are plenty around, especially at the morgue to get you some... inspiration. Chakra construct is just that, a construct. It's up to you to shape it the way you want. The difficult part would be-”

“To connect it to the stump and make it functional.” Tsunade interjected but followed his train of thoughts.

“Yes but since it would be a chakra construct similar to a shadow clone it would have a chakra pathway so we may use that to connect Sandaime-sama's own with the... clone. Afterward it may be just a question of extensive chakra control to make the arm move. Not only that but since the construct would be directly linked to the original chakra pathway it would be perpetually infused with chakra and thus never dispelled by lack of it. It may be even possible to make the construct more durable so it wouldn't dispel in one hit like a regular shadow clone.”

Tsunade pondered about that. Connecting a real chakra network to a constructed one was really an idea from out there but should it be possible the hardest part would be over and everything else would be technically possible.

“Or.. Hum... I mean... I just thought about it, but graft you a dead guy's left arm? Disgusting but that may work better?”

“Let's... hear your other ideas and put this one to the side for now, Hm?” said Hiruzen did not appeal to this idea.

“My second idea was simply a puppet arm.”

“Good idea but unfortunately that's a secret art from Suna.” Homura commented.

“We could always ask for a scroll in the negotiation for the new treaty? Or not. Sarutobi-sama is not called the ‘professor’ for nothing.” Riku reminded them, then turned to Hiruzen. “It's obvious puppets are used via chakra strings, I'm sure you have the knowledge and experience to adapt it for your needs by engineering something new. At worst it's a good project to pass the time now that you're officially retired.”

“Hmm. That it is. It's been a while since I created a new jutsu. And a non-elemental one at that.”

“My third idea is Chakra shape and elemental manipulation. You use your chakra to shape it like an arm and make it so it's of the Earth element? It's more tangible than the others. That would be insanely difficult though. Then lastly. Seals. For all my previous ideas. To facilitate the connections between you and the... prosthetic? Bypassing the damaged tissues by using seals as a bridge over those areas and connecting the two parts together. Some ideas would take more time than others but with the help of shadow clones...”

Koharu frowned hearing the last part, not understanding how the shadow clone could help.

“Why shadow clones?”

“Page 8 of the file.” Tsunade told her and the elderly woman opened it to have a look, Homura still looking over her shoulders. After reading the whole page both their eyes nearly popped out of their orbits.

“This is insane!”

“Do you realize-”

“““Yes!”””

“Why do you think we’re keeping quiet about this? That knowledge would do more harm than good if widely known. It could backfire horribly against us.” commented Hiruzen.

“So far, I intend to make a list of very loyal and trusted shinobi to share that secret but that takes time. The chakra requirement is... awful to say the least. Honestly, apart from myself, Jiraiya and the two Uzumaki in the village and maybe, it’s a small maybe, Riku. I don’t see who else.” Tsunade added.

“ME?!”

“Riku, why are you surprised about it?” his sensei said in a deadpanned tone. “You can make four Shadow clones, almost five, at thirteen.”

“That amount of chakra at your age is rarely seen.” agreed Koharu.

“I... don’t know? Compared to others...”

“Which others?”

“Izumo-senpai and Kotetsu-senpai and... Oh.”

Realization finally hit him. Right until now, he had only compared himself to the people around him. Meaning adults for the most part. And the only other people of his age worth comparing himself to had been Naruto and Karin. Both Uzumaki with massive chakra reserves.

“Finally realized it, huh? I guess you do have some moments of stupidity.” Hiruzen teased with a chuckle.

“Nobody is perfect.” Riku answered with a shrug, trying to hide his embarrassment. “Anyway, that’s it with my ideas. I’ll try to look into the seals’ side of things but I’m

already busy with finding a way to send back the Shodai and Nidaime back to the pure lands...”

“It’s fine we have plenty of ventures to explore. All thanks to you.”

“In that case. I’ll take my leave. And sorry for the interruption.”

He gave everyone a bow and exited the office but not before Tsunade called out to him.

“Don’t forget about the quiz tonight!”

“I didn’t and I won’t, sensei!” was his answer just as he closed the door.

Looking at the elders, Tsunade had a smug smile on her face.

“Fine! You were right! Happy?!” Koharu exclaimed.

“Very.”

“We still need to present him in a good light. Unfortunately his ideas and findings can’t be made public which doesn’t help.”

“Let the people talk for now, Homura. And give him time. Konoha wasn’t built in a day. At the rate he’s growing he will come up with many things that will be made public.”

After leaving the office, Riku wanted to go see Karin, unfortunately she was with Shizune at the hospital. He had introduced the Uzumaki to his senpai and sensei when he got permission from the latter to invite her for dinner a few days earlier. The opportunity of meeting Tsunade who is the best medic in the world and a distant blood relative was all it took for Riku to be forgiven for ‘ditching’ Karin to live at the Senju Compound. She had been pissed beyond all hell and Riku was reminded of his new sensei a bit when she was pissed herself. Thankfully his invitation calmed her down quickly and before Karin could become violent and try to beat the shit out of him. That was a new side of the redhead that he had discovered and wasn’t yet sure if he liked it or not.

Nevertheless, dinner went well and Tsunade admitted that Karin had some talent in the medical field, especially in research with the many questions and ideas she had. As such she decided to take her as a student but not an apprentice until she changed her mind and metaphorically tossed her at Shizune. Her eldest apprentice had been surprised at that and unsure. Tsunade had good arguments for Karin becoming her apprentice. She didn’t have time to take another and more importantly because it was time for Shizune to strike it on her own and was perfectly capable of being a teacher herself. She did promise to teach Karin from time to time though but nothing more. Karin

has been a tad disappointed but learning directly under Shizune was the second best thing. She also did get the promise to become Tsunade's apprentice at a later time once Riku's training was advanced enough, which prompted the redhead to urge him to work hard and fast.

For his part Riku was stuck in the village, reading the two dozen medical books that Tsunade had given him. The thinnest of them was at least 400 pages. Thankfully, for him, he had shadow clones and with a very carefully made schedule used them to his full potential without dealing with the nasty effect of memory recollection. At best he got a headache a few times but that was it. During his free time, he was theorizing on how to create a seal that would put to rest the Hokages brought back by Orochimaru. Neither Hiruzen nor Tsunade gave him access to the Edo Tensei or the nidaime notes on it, thinking that such knowledge was too dangerous. When they explained in detail that the jutsu used a living sacrifice to summon the soul of the dead by help of the dead's genetic material and that as a result they recovered a copy of their dead body and got invincibility and unlimited chakra. Thankfully, depending on the chakra reserves of the sacrifice, their own reserves would be limited in consequences. Riku thanked Kami for small mercies and also understood why the Edo Tensei's knowledge was a tightly kept secret. That left him a bit in a bind but he had enough to think about some things.

That was what he decided to work on when he got home. He created three clones and gave them the task to make dinner, despite being hours away. Today he wanted to make something special. He knew that she didn't care about fancy food; chicken breasts and sake was her favorite and it was a very mundane dish but since today was her official debut as the Godaime Hokage it was imperative, in his mind, that the celebrations were one to remember. He had decided on making a recipe called 'Peking Duck' and it took more than three hours to make. That didn't leave much room for errors.

One of the clones brought him some tea and put it on the living room's table where Riku sat. He had already begun to scribble notes on the few ideas he had to the current Kage problem at hand.

'Okay... Soooo. From what I read of yang and yin... Why is it always said 'Yin and yang' by the way? Nevermind, not important. Yang is more or less life and Yin is the shape yet yang is physical energy and yin spiritual energy. That's confusing but I already tackled that problem when I recreate the shuriken clone jutsu. So I have a sacrifice, a body, yang and I have a soul, a yin. The way I see it, the straightforward way to resolve the problem is to disconnect the two because getting rid of the yan would only push the yin to reconstruct it. Or not? Does the reconstruction process of the body come from something else?... Another type of chakra? No, that's stupid. Yin and yang are the fundamental of all types of chakras. Elemental and medical, if there was another wouldn't it be known by now? Anyway, back to disconnected yang and yin (yeah that sounds better). A seal that would block the use of one type of chakra by the other? Would that release the soul back to the pure lands? No, probably not. That's a bad idea for this problem. Perhaps absorbing the yang chakra into a seal? With nowhere else to

go, the yan may go back to the after life? Or create another body which will be full of yang. Ugh. I'm going in circles... What else? Take control of them from Orochimaru and force them to release the jutsu themselves? Is there even a release to that jutsu? Probably, the Nidaime came up with it and with how horrifying that jutsu is, I doubt he would not have created a way to get rid of his creations. Or maybe he didn't, he was a moron after all. Maybe he staked his victims somewhere? Used Space-time ninjutsu or fuinjutsu to send them to another dimension? I'm drifting away from the topic again! What was the idea already? Ah! Yes, take control. Now that's interesting, how did Orochimaru get control in the first place? Is it inherent to the jut..."

"Aaaah!"

Riku yelled and instinctively moved away from his position to the back of the living room, ready to fight and defend himself. All because something poked him in the cheek. His sense on alert, he noticed Tsunade laughing her ass off, sitting right next to his previous location.

"Sensei! That's not funny!" he whined and relaxed his stance.

"It sure is! Your reaction was priceless!" she replied, still laughing.

"Why did you do that in the first place? And why are you here? Shouldn't you be in your office?" he asked and went back to his seat.

"Because you needed a break and because the day is over." she answered him with an amused smile.

Riku blinked and looked outside. The sun would be completely gone in a few minutes.

"Oh." he said in realization. He had spent the whole day thinking about his problem and didn't see the time fly. It had felt like an hour at best in his estimate.

"Yes. Now, be careful when you lose yourself in your thoughts it's-"

"Dangerous if I do that in an unsecure location and even then I still should keep some awareness of my surroundings. Sorry." he replied sheepishly.

"Good but knowing is not enough. Practice it."

"I'll use a clone to ambush me when I do that from now on."

"Hmm smart. Now It's only you and me tonight-"

"Eh? Isn't Shizune-senpai-"

“One of the doctors got sick and Shizune took his night shift. Of course Karin is with her.”

“I have you all for me then?” he grinned and raised his fist, channeling medical chakra in it. Tsunade’s amused face turned into a frown. She knew what he was thinking of.

“You’re not using that jutsu on me again! I forbid you! It’s dangerous!”

“Butt!”

“No butts ! My breasts are already too big as they are.”

“Oh, no! I was talking about your posterior! To see if that-”

This time he wasn’t flicked on the forehead. No. Tsunade used her hand like a claw and gripped his head in an iron vice.

“I’m sorry, sensei!” he quickly said and she released him.

“Why is my student a pervert!” she lamented.

“I’m not! I mean beyond the normal behavior of a healthy teenage boy I don’t go out of my way to... you know... I’m really curious if my jutsu works on other parts of the body and I kind of wanted to balance your body again.”

“You don’t balance shit, got it?” she glared.

“Yeah, yeah. Not without your permission, sensei. I got it.”

“Now, pick your wallet, we’re going out.”

“Out? For what?”

“Eat of course!” she said, rolling her eyes.

“B-but. I’ve been working on dinner since this morning! To celebrate you becoming Hokage!”

“This morning?! What did you cook? A feast?” she asked in surprise and curiosity. She was fond of Riku’s cuisine after only a week and a few days.

“Come on! Let me show you!” he said enthusiastically as he got up.

He took her by the hand and pulled her up on her feet then dragged her away to the kitchen.

“You still have your quiz-”

“After dinner. Not like it would take long anyway.”

“Confident are you?”

“100%/. And I mean by that, it will be my score.”

“Oh? Want to make a bet on it?”

“Sensei, with your luck if you bet that I won’t score a 100. I will score a 100 by simple divine intervention. It would defeat the whole point of me studying.” he replied with a deadpan voice.

“Fair enough.”