

Out For Karma: Naruto

#Chapter 61: Changes - Read Out For Karma: Naruto

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The fallout of Naruto's actions on Karin had been minimal. The fact that she had protected and healed plenty of people during the assault played a big role in keeping the respect of the ninja population. Her reputation with the civilians took a bit of a hit but that was alright. No one treated her badly, they just treated her with wariness. That had been expected.

Kushina and Minato had moved out and Riku did his best to help them into their new home. He helped Kushina in warding the whole place by inscribing seals on the outside and inside the place, directly on the walls. Under his eyes, an unconscious Naruto was brought out of the storage seal he had been locked up in and saw Minato put all the restricting seals on his youngest son. He was missing his right arm, just below the elbow but the wound was already healed. Courtesy of the Kyuubi's chakra.

Riku had been a bit disconcerted by Kushina thanking him when he was the one who hurt her baby boy in the first place. She had answered that most anyone else would have killed Naruto and worried about the consequences later. A missing arm was a small price to pay for his life instead.

Riku left the small family alone before Naruto would wake and things become complicated.

The alliance with Kiri was quickly settled. After quickly running his terms to the elders who gave the greenlight, Riku had proposed a non-aggression pact between the mist, the leaf and the sand. He had been insistent on Suna being included and recognized by Kiri as a proper village still and Mei had seen no problem with it. The alliance was also a military defensive pact. Should any of its members be attacked, the other members would take up arms and help defeat their opponent. It was purely a reactionary close. There wouldn't be any obligation should one of the villages be the aggressor. Lastly, Riku negotiated Humanitarian help if one of the villages ever got in trouble like Suna did. Mei tried to negotiate that but Riku sweetened the deal with what was left of Hoshigaki Kisame and his sword (that Riku learned was named Samehada). Yugao had also given him the Kibas to use in the negotiation, saying that it really didn't fit the aesthetic of her home in the end. Finally, a sharing of information was agreed upon, regarding activities of villages not part of the alliance. The utter failure of Iwa and Kumo's assault on both fronts had put the war on a break which turned it into a cold war.

Neither Mei nor Riku believed that launching an assault right now on their enemies was worth it. Both Konoha and Kiri were rebuilding themselves and would be at full strength before Iwa or Kumo could restore theirs.

In the end, Mei left the village with her bodyguards satisfied with the alliance.

Speaking of Yugao, Riku convinced her to stay at the manor at least until his mother got back. Shizune was still living there but they rarely saw each other because of their respective work and Riku felt lonely. Ino and Karin could have moved in anytime but the former wanted to enjoy living with her parents a bit more and the latter wanted to spend some time without her sensei around. Hinata wasn't free like that unfortunately.

He had discussed with Temari what she and her people would do. After deliberating much on the question, she decided that with how things were with Iwa, Suna could be rebuilt. Riku promised wood for free to build homes and a repayment plan for any materials or other monetary help Konoha would lend to the hidden sand. As such a big group of Suna-nins and a few civilians left for their home to rebuild it. The rest stayed in Konoha a bit longer because logistically, it wasn't possible for them to make the trip.

Konoha was almost done with the reconstruction and looked even better than what she used to. Riku had grown the trees inside the village himself and his popularity with the villagers skyrocketed. Both for doing it and using the mokuton. The old timers even older than Hiruzen were talking about the second coming of the Shodai or about a new golden age for Konoha. Riku had been amazed at the stupidity of that. He was more like his Uncle Tobirama than Hashirama after all.

Anbu had reported the result of their investigation on how Iwa and Kumo had infiltrated the Land of Fire to reach its very heart and attack Konoha without being detected. Apparently, the outposts with Ame's borders and the Land of Stairs had their garrison completely slaughtered from the inside. Riku believed it was 'Madara' or this Zetsu that infiltrated them with their respective methods. Nagato didn't know how Zetsu did it but 'Madara' was definitely using a Mangekyo sharingan's ability for that. As such Riku brainstormed for a way to counter said ability with fuinjutsu.

That wasn't his only project regarding seals. Hinata had provided him with a copy of the notes on the cage bird seal and the five seal masters in the village put their heads together to find a way to remove it safely and to create new protective seals for the Byakugan. One month was all it took for success on both fronts.

"Are you sure it will work?" Hiashi asked Riku.

The Hyuga clan head had been formally invited with Hinata to the Senju manor to discuss hers and Riku relationship and engagement. That is officially. In truth they were planning the unification of the main and side branch of the patriarch family.

"It is. You got the best seal masters and mistresses in the whole Elemental Nations, plus Jiraiya..."

"Brat!"

"Who worked on it. Considering that if it fails, Hinata may not forgive me for that, you can be sure that I triple checked the triple check."

"... Very well." He turned towards his daughter with a pensive look. "Is this really what you want?"

"I do, father. I know you don't approve but the four of us... We're family of sorts. We can't imagine living with a single one missing."

"... Daughter... Hinata."

"I'll fight you if I have to, father."

The determination and confidence she had in her eyes, voice and posture made Hiashi mellow a bit. He was proud of who she had become and ashamed of considering her a failure all those years ago. Now she was standing on her own two feet, making friends with the future leader of two clans and possibly three and also the probably next Hokage.

"I will respect your choice, my daughter."

Thus started the plan of emancipating the side branch and taking care of the elders. In one single night, thanks to the Botib and five seal masters the 350 members of the side branch were all freed from their slavery and given the new protective seal that was put on top of the head and hidden by the hair. Riku had freed Hinae himself and he got a big thank you kiss out of it. Hinata let it slide but was very descriptive of what she would do to the jonin should she try that again. The very sweet voice the moon princess had used as she threatened her older cousin sent chills down the spine of many Hyuga that were present today. It was clear that Riku was off limits.

The new dynamics of the Hyuga clan was explained to the elders who didn't like not having their slaves anymore. Some turned murderous and tried to take control back by force. Before Hiashi could deal with them Hinata did by simply being faster. She even used moves she had created and her lightning affinity with it. The mutinous elders had no chance. She proclaimed a new age for the Hyuga clan and listed a few changes. While every shinobi of the clan would learn the Juken, no one was restricted to it.

"It's time we do away with the tradition that shackles us down. Our clan is strong, yet we never had an S-rank Shinobi or one of our own considered as a candidate for Hokage. All because we're sticking to the Juken and the Juken only when our Byakugan can do

so much more. In the medical field alone we could be the best and we could be looked at with reverence for saving lives.”

Afterward, she publicly renounced her heiress status because of her engagement to Riku (he still had to properly propose to her). Many were favorable for the match but worried about her position as a second wife since Riku being engaged to Ino was a known fact.

“There is no first or second wife in our relationship. We’re friends and partners, everyone has an equal say.”

It has been a bit of a scandal when the news reached outside the Hyuga compound. Riku was marrying two women and that usually wasn’t done. Usually being the key word. The old timers were supportive and just argued that there will be more Senju in the long run and that it was just better for Konoha.

While Hinata renounced her position as a Heiress, Ino couldn’t. Sure a cousin could take her place but it was her duty to lead the clan one day and she refused to ignore it. It was agreed after discussion that Riku and Ino’s first born would be a Yamanaka and succeed Ino as the heir or heiress. No one had any objection to that.

On the Uzumaki side of things. Both Kushina and Karin had agreed to petitioning for making their clans recognized as a clan of Konoha. Naruto should have been involved as well but he was acting like a child and throwing a temper tantrum for Sasuke’s death and his punishment for his actions. It hadn’t yet sunk in that he should have been executed for what he did.

Regardless, Karin would be the one to agree to the conditions put forward by the villages. In other words, children. Kushina wanted to be part of it too as she wanted a bigger family but the situation with Naruto made her think it wasn’t wise. She, having another child and giving them everything that Naruto didn’t get? That was a bit too cruel in her opinion. She didn’t give up on the idea though and hoped one day her son would be alright with being a big brother.

Their plans hit a bump on the road however when one of the conditions was to give birth to a child within the first three years and a second within the first five. Karin didn’t mind but that scrambled Riku’s plan of becoming a father by half a decade at the very least. The foursome had a discussion about it and Hinata shared that she didn’t want to wait until her late twenties to become a mother. That left only Ino wanting for that and everyone respected her choice. In the end, Riku changed his mind about waiting out of love for his bluenette and redhead.

With Konoha returning to normal (mostly), a nasty consequence showed up on Riku’s desk. Paperwork. With new business opening and new repartition of the village’s area the amount of documents Riku had to read and stamp had almost tripled. The worst? Hinata wasn’t his assistant anymore. She was helping her newly freed family to

accommodate themselves and helping her father dealing with everything. On top of that she was still learning at the hospital and helping the Hyugas that wanted to enter the medical field. There was a lot of work to do because of their better than you attitude that all clan members, no matter the branch, had.

There was always someone from the council with him. Most of the time it was Hiruzen because he had nothing else to do except maybe, sometimes, babysitting his granddaughter or visiting Naruto to mostly talk about what being a hokage was about beyond “being the strongest shinobi in the village”. The visits were few for now with Naruto’s attitude.

Today however the entirety of Team Hiruzen was present in the Hokage office but also Minato and Iruka. The meeting was about changing the curriculum taught at the Academy. With open war looming in the horizon, children didn’t have the option to laze about.

“66% of failure in the genin test is unacceptable. From the reports I have read, most of the time it’s less about the students skills and more about their immaturity.” he commented.

“True but they are children.” Minato said.

“Children that aim to become shinobi.” nuanced Koharu. “I’m not saying they shouldn’t enjoy their youth, I’m saying they should understand what being a shinobi entails. Yes, we need to lie to them to sell the shinobi life but at the same time we can’t have most of them fail and go to the genin corps ignorant of the reality. It’s a waste of resources, most notably time and lives because they won’t be ready to face the hardship a ninja encounters outside the village.”

“A good balance needs to be found between lies and truth.” Homura agreed.

“So far I... took the liberty to reduce the time spent on history to increase the practical portion of their education but only so slightly. Your point of being more detailed about how to do things was a welcome change and my students showed promising results.” reported his father.

““““What point?”””” asked everyone in the room not in the know.

“We can’t just tell them: ‘Here’s what you should do, now do it.’ It’s inefficient. It’s better to tell them the process step by step. The example I had used was the leaf exercise. The correct way to teach it is to tell them to focus their chakra on their forehead and imagine it’s like some glue so the leaf would stick.”

“Well, yes, isn’t it...Oh.” Hiruzen said in realization.

"The instructors are so used to those basic and easy exercises that they don't stop and think that the children are not." commented Iruka.

"Yes. Also I think that as children 'training' is well... boring and annoying. So maybe creating games or challenges that make them work unknowingly about what they need to learn would be a good thing. I remember challenging myself by putting a leaf on each tip of my finger and making them turn right on the odd and left on the even fingers."

"That's an interesting chakra control exercise." noted Homura.

"For the more advanced, for sure." nodded Hiruzen.

"I let the two of you come up with ways to make the exercises more entertaining." Riku said to Iruka and Minato. "Now let's speak about what a student should know by the time he graduates. I was thinking at the very least, the tree walking to start with. What do you think?"

On and on they talked about what was acceptable and not, what was doable and not. It took all morning to set the foundation of the new curriculum and would reconvene on it the next morning. When the meeting ended, Tsunade made an appearance as everyone was leaving for lunch. Riku didn't bother to greet her and just flashed away to her shock.

"Did you really expect a warm welcome, Tsunade?" inquired Hiruzen, staying behind in the office.

"Well, yes! It's been a month since..."

"Exactly Tsunade, a month. Without a word from you."

"He was away for far longer and rarely sent a message!" she protested. In her mind she did nothing wrong.

"Tsunade, you dumped on him your job. You didn't bother to know about what happened that day. You could have at least come back to the village to check on him and on things."

"I know my son, sensei. I knew he would do well. You agreed too!"

"For a short time, Tsunade. Dealing with the paperwork? He could deal with that. Dealing with the aftermath of an invasion? He wasn't ready for it."

"He had you and the elders for-"

"None of us could help him deal with the slaughter of ten thousand people with his own hands, Tsunade."

That cut her short and rendered her speechless.

“You didn’t think of that, did you? Iwa and Kumo attacked with a combined force of 16 thousand and Riku dealt with most of them. Alone. On top of finishing the rest of Akatsuki. The job? He did more than well and didn’t need our help at all. Unburdening himself for the choices he made? That he did very badly. He focused on work and nothing else. Young Hinata helped as much as she could but there was a limit. Who he needed was **you**. You could have delayed your training for a single day but chose not to.”

“I...”

“You have a lot of groveling to do, Tsunade. In any case, It’s good to have you back home. The village without you is never quite the same.”

Hiruzen left the office leaving Tsunade by her lonesome. It wasn’t the welcome she had expected but she had so much faith in her son that the thought he wouldn’t do well never crossed his mind. Even when he was completely crippled he never gave up and pushed forward with his iron will. He was so different from her in that regard that she believed he could overcome anything. From what Kakashi and Minato told her about his reactions to what he did in the Land of Wind, she believed that no matter what Iwa and Kumo had sent his way he would have been fine.

Apparently, she has been wrong.

Chapter 62: Heart to Heart

Tsunade went home.

Not like she had anywhere else to go nor did she have anything else to do than talk with her son. She has messed up and for something that... was worth it but could have waited another day more. She was a slug sage now. Under Katsuyu’s guidance she had learned how to feel and harness nature energy to mould nature chakra. The most difficult part of the training was feeling the nature around herself, then gathering the nature energy into her body. She had used a cheat though. Katsuyu had given her a moss full of nature energy that grew all over Shikkotsu Forest. She had to sucked on it and feel the new energy fill her body. Not too much or she would have become... Well, she didn’t know for sure. Katsuyu didn’t tell her and with her chakra control she had no problem not going overboard. She had thought about it though and she believed she would either become part of the forest as a tree or moss, a slug or possibly a part of Katsuyu herself. That would explain why the slug was so big. When she began moulding nature chakra, Tsunade had been able to sense everything around her and what she discovered had unsettled her greatly. The giant Katsuyu that she summoned?

She was small compared to her true form. The real one was living under the soil of Shikkotsu Forest and was absolutely gigantic. She was pretty sure that she was at least as tall as the Hokage mountain. She didn't dare imagine the amount of chakra needed to summon the slug in her ultimate form. Perhaps only a jinchuriki would be able to.

Her new status as a sage was attained within ten days and she chose to stay twenty more for two reasons. One to rejuvenate her body. No matter how Riku could do it with his Iryoken, her first experience with it made her reticent at experiencing it again. So she took her time to heal her cells back into two earlier cycles. To avoid for her breasts to grow even more by giving them a **third** taste of puberty she had decided to rejuvenate her body meticulously, part by part. That took roughly a week to achieve. Now, she was actually as young as she looked and wasn't using her chakra and her seal to maintain the illusion of her beauty. Once done, she began to experiment with her healing abilities. She compared it to what she knew of her grandfather's and her son's. She was almost as good as the former and far from the later. Why Riku's healing was vastly superior was something she put on perhaps his drop of Uzumaki blood in his veins. The question as to why she didn't have it crossed her mind but paid no attention to it. Karin had said that her mother had her special healing chakra but not the eye of Kagura nor the Adamantine chains. Her father, who had been an Uzumaki too, had neither. That made Tsunade realize that she and Riku really needed to study cells with more intensity to discover why one individual got something but their parents or their children didn't. All in all, the training had been worth it. And now she was sure that she wouldn't lose in a contest of strength against the Raikage.

That was the reason why she had left right after the summit. She knew that Riku would do an excellent job in her absence and also knew that the elders would not let her go through with it since she was the Hokage and war was upon the village. It was the perfect moment for her to go power up. But.... She could have gone back to the village discreetly, talked with Riku about it and then got reverse-summoned. Now, she had to shoulder the consequence of her actions.

Arriving in the dining room she was surprised to see no one there. Usually when she decided to have lunch at home there was always someone. Riku at the very least or Minato and Kushina. Leaving the room she went to her son's and found his Botib in there. Opened.

She got inside and had a look around. She went into the garden first but didn't find him there and returned to the main room. Wondering for a moment which room he was in, she noticed a new door near the Kitchen. Out of curiosity she went in and was baffled by what she saw. The new area wasn't much bigger than the garden and at first look seemed the same, yet between the trees she discerned a small artificial lake, not very deep, with another Gazebo on top of it right in the middle. Her sharp eyes discerned the top of dirty blonde hair going over the Gazebo's rail. Walking on water she made her way towards Riku who was busy writing seals on the ground. She couldn't help herself. She hugged him from behind and he didn't react beyond stopping writing his seal.

"I'm sorry." she opened the conversation with.

"..."

"I have so much faith in you, in what you can do that I... didn't take into consideration how you may feel about the things you had to do. You have always been blowing my expectations away, always pushed forward no matter what, as if you could shoulder everything. I took that for granted and I shouldn't have. I shouldn't have handed you my job like that for a whole month."

"... I'm not mad that you handed the job to me." he spoke up after a bit of silence. "I'm not mad that I had to shoulder the consequences of my decisions. I'm mad that you didn't even bother to tell me yourself, I'm mad that... I felt alone to deal with everything. It brought me back to... a time where I had nothing and no one but myself to count on and nobody gave a shit about anything I did. I'm also unreasonably mad that I felt so out of my depth, observed and judged by everyone, from the kids running in the streets to the elders and the old generation. Ino, Karin and Hinata were there. The old monkey was there. Yugao and Shizune from time to time. Yet... Yet I felt alone even when they were present."

She said nothing but took note of a few things. First was that Hiruzen was now referred to as the 'old monkey' which told her that something must have happened between the two. Then he made no mention of Jiraiya, Minato or Kushina, who so far while not being a family has been helpful and kind of supportive.

"I'm sorry I put you through that. I truly am. It's over now. I won't leave like that again."

Riku still didn't look at her but leaned backward to melt into her embrace and sink into her bosom. A sigh of contentment escaped him but he didn't care.

"I feel awful." he finally said.

"About what?"

"Correction, I feel great right **now** but otherwise, I feel awful because... I killed them all and feel nothing about it. I don't even remember their faces. I was going too fast to notice them. I just remember... the yells full of fear, the boom of their bodies exploding and the disgusting sounds their flesh made. I felt nauseous at the results of my touch but I felt nothing for them."

"You... feel awful because you didn't sympathize with them? Or felt guilty for taking their lives?" she asked, a bit confused.

"Yeah. I thought... What happened to Suna was an isolated incident. I was tired back then. I've been running myself ragged. But here? I was in perfect condition thanks to

Karin. Despite having killed the rest of the Akatsuki and surviving Naruto impaling me, I-”

“I’m sorry, what?!” she exclaimed, doing a double take at what she just heard.

“Oh, yeah. That happened. That’s not the topic at hand though so I’ll fill you in later. What I’m worried about is what kind of person I am or becoming. I... have no qualms killing so many people when I should. On the other side of things I am genuinely compassionate towards people and I don’t understand how... I guess I can be both of such extremes? Does it make sense?”

“It does. You’re not the first ninja to be able to draw a line between caring and uncaring between people so radically. You do are the first to have so much power and use it. Uncle Tobirama was the same. He was way colder publicly than you are but in private he was as loving and caring. There is nothing wrong with that Riku and you’re not a bad person. Certainly not a monster if that is what you thought.”

“...”

Riku said nothing and contemplated what his mother had said instead. He didn’t tell her, or anyone but he was terrified that one day he would come to see everyone the way he had seen the Iwa and Kumo ninja. A task to accomplish, an annoyance. There was no point in thinking about this now. Not when he was feeling so good and mostly at peace.

“It’s going to be cuddle night all week.” he simply said.

“Fine by me.” she replied with a smile. “I miss them so much.” she added, squeezing him harder and leaning forward to kiss his forehead.

“Was it worth it? Your training?”

“Yes. I’ve accomplished much. I’ll tell you all about this at dinner tonight. Now... tell me what this place is about? Or who is it for?”

“It’s for Hinata. Most of our time together was spent in secret near the Naka river. I want to recreate the atmosphere but in a calmer setting. That’s not the core of the room though. I’m trying to set the Gazebo’s ceiling to display the illusion of the night sky. Make a different kind of romantic setting than the garden.”

“Why not use... you hate genjutsu. Forgot about that for a moment.”

“Yes. I don’t like messing with people’s senses like that.”

After a while, lunch break was over and Riku went back to work. To be more precise, Tsunade went back to work and Riku filled her in with everything that happened during her absence. She was baffled by what had happened on the day of the attack alone.

“So that’s why there was no one at the manor.”

“Yep.”

“I can’t believe Naruto... You were lenient.”

“I was. I was hoping that being confronted with the consequences of his actions would make him mature.”

“And? How is it going so far?”

“Minato and Kushina say that it’s a slow process. He understood that attacking me was wrong and that he’s lucky to be under house arrest and not dead. He also understood that it wasn’t the time for a fight and that he let everyone down. However he refused to acknowledge that Sakura did anything wrong and shouldn’t be in jail and that I didn’t have to kill Sasuke who in his mind is still his best friend. The only thing the therapist was able to tell me because of my position was that the sessions are not going well. There have only been four so far. It’s not much but from what I understood, Naruto stubbornly denies he has some mental issues and needs help.”

“Maybe I should visit him myself. I won’t be as nice as you are.”

“I know. I was of the mind to have him locked up for life but the Sandaime dissuaded me. Right now, I just want to tell him to suck it up.”

“Would meeting his teammate help?”

“No. Sakura was diagnosed with another personality and is what is called a ‘limerent’. Don’t ask me what it is, I don’t know. I had better things to do than ask further about her.”

“Definitely need to talk with her therapist. She’s too good a medic for her talent to go to waste.”

“I agree. That’s why I’ve been lenient with her too.”

He then showed her the plans of the revamped Academy’s curriculum.

“That’s... In a way it’s not a harsher training but it is more focused.”

“I tried to give them the best instructions possible without sacrificing their childhood despite the political climate. If war starts again they will be ready for the kind of mission genin are supposed to do. There will be no naive immature idiot that gets themselves killed or their team because of it.”

“What was done regarding Iwa and Kumo?”

“Honestly? I suggested going to Iwa and slaughtering everyone but I was unanimously turned down.”

“Even Koharu and Homura?” She asked in surprise and Riku nodded in affirmation.
“That’s not like them.”

“No. Anyway, I sent them a threat. If a single Iwa or Kumo ninja steps a single foot inside the Land of Fire or the territories of their allies I will make what they did to Uzushioagakure seem like a happy event compared to what I will do to them. None of them answered.”

“... That’s a bit disturbing, Riku.”

“I know but I already have a reputation in the Elemental Nations so I banked on it. I’m not going to kill defenseless people from their village but the point is for them to believe that I will. To counterbalance that, I was thinking of being friendly with our allies or neutral countries. Our deal with Suna for the reconstruction of the village is technically in their favor, we are giving them resources while losing money. Except the resources are things like wood.”

“And we don’t pay for that since you’re making it with mokuton. So we’re not making money but we’re not losing some either. All the while we appear as generous and more interested in our relationship than in money.”

“Yes. It’s also the same for healing tags or seals of all kinds.”

“That’s a good idea. Which countries were you expecting to reach?”

Picking up a map of the continent from one of the shelves, he unfolded it on the desk.

“I counted ten. Spring, Hot Water, Yamato, Iron, Birds, Mountain Streams, Vegetables, Flowers, Valleys and lastly: Fangs.”

“Those are almost all countries sharing borders with either Iwa or Kumo. The exceptions being Iron, Hot Water and Fangs. Why fangs?”

“It’s next to Kiri and next to the land of Lightning through the sea. It covers the East side of the country while Yamato, the South and Hot Water and Iron the West. North is Spring.”

“Alright, it’s worth making an overture to these countries just for their location. I suppose you’re thinking of moving troops yourself through the Botib or storage seal?”

“Yes. I also intend to create permanent bases underground with an Hiraishin marker in each of them. More than that, I’m going to bury hiraishin tags everywhere to make a huge network.”

“What for?”

“Hit and run tactics. An open conflict would be too costly in resources and lives. If there are tags everywhere, troops could arrive, do their thing and disappear at a moment's notice. The enemy would lose their mind trying to find out how we destroyed their supply lines from the back when it's well guarded.”

“They may think they have traitors in their ranks. Breeding mistrust and disunity. Clever.”

“I'm working on two other things. Both complicated and complex. One is using each base as a center of a sensing area which could allow us to know in advance the accurate movements of troops. Two using the hiraishin to make long distance communication available in real time without delay. No more messengers that take days or weeks to travel and with information that may not be accurate anymore.”

Tsunade looked at her son with wonder in her eyes. The ideas he presented to her were revolutionary. Should it be applicable, Konoha would have the military advantage in almost any situation. Should they be caught however, it would spell trouble.

“How long for... Everything?”

“I don't know. The seals? A month, perhaps two. Placing them and the bases? Lot of time. Anbu would be overworked, that's for sure. Maybe recruit infiltration specialists from the regular corps? I have plenty of Botibs to make too. That will take the longest.”

“Karin and Kushina?”

“Hm... I don't know how long it would take for me to teach them how to make one and for them how to learn but it's doable with shadow clones.”

“Good. I want this to be your priority. The faster everything is in place the better we'll be prepared. I don't know what kind of deal Akatsuki made with Iwa or Kumo but I doubt they will act before resplendishing their forces so it's reasonable to think we have a bit of time.”

Riku nodded and flashed away back to the manor. He created two shadow clones and sent them to call for the village seal mistresses.

Chapter 63: Life goes on (Part VII)

“I don't want to appear rude by saying this but, you look like shit.”

Umino Iruka was worried about his former students in front of him. Riku had bags under his eyes that were darker than the night.

“When was the last time you took a break?” Minato asked from Iruka’s side. They were waiting in front of the hokage office to start hopefully the last meeting regarding the academy curriculum.

“What day is it?” Riku answered in a tired voice.

“Monday, Riku. No one should be that tired on the first day of the week.”

“I know, sensei. Can’t be helped, I’m stuck on a seal and it’s driving me crazy.”

“What kind of seal, if I may ask?” inquired Minato.

“Sensing seals.”

“Really? That’s not difficult, you saw Kushina and Karin working on the village’s barrier.”

“Yes but those kinds of seals are not discreet. They use chakra in a concentrated point. On an infiltration mission you’d be like a beacon constantly advertising your position.”

“I see.”

“The fact that I’m not a natural sensor, makes things more difficult. Karin just sees and Yugao just ‘feels’ and I don’t know any sensor besides those two.”

“That’s not quite true. I’m a sensor myself.” Iruka revealed.

“I... didn’t know that.”

“I don’t advertise it much. How do you think I always found Naruto when he was anywhere but in class, huh?”

“That makes sense now. You always knew.”

“Yes. Now, I don’t know what Karin-san and Yugao-san do but personally, I pulses my chakra into the ground with my eyes closed. I can roughly determine what’s in the surrounding area in a 100 m radius. The downside of this jutsu is that should enemies have a sensor among them I’ll be caught.”

Riku looked at Iruka with his jaw hanging low.

“Sensei! You’re brilliant!”

In a forest green flash, Riku disappeared right in front of the two men's eyes.

“I don’t know what I said but it seems he found the solution to his problem.”

“I can’t wait to hear what he came up with.”

The two men were then invited by Hisho-san to go into the office to start the meeting. They told her that Riku just got an idea and flashed away to work on it. As such he probably wouldn’t be present for the meeting. Tsunade was both happy and annoyed by the news but rolled with it. Hiruzen and both elders were already present so the meeting started immediately.

“Iruka, do you have a list of the veterans that you think would give a lecture?”

“I do Hokage-sama. Here it is.” the chunin instructor replied and picked a page from the folder he had with him. Tsunade gave it a look and was surprised to see some particular names.

“You can’t be serious.”

“I am, hokage-sama. Very few have as much experience.”

“That’s true but...”

“Who are we talking about?” Koharu inquired, not liking being out of the loop.

“The three of you.” Tsunade replied bluntly.

“““ ...”””

“Us?”

“I’m with Hiruzen on this. Us?” repeated Homura.

“It’s for a two hour lecture once a month. I was thinking that Koharu-sama could teach the young girls what a true kunoichi is. Perhaps start a support group too? To make sure that fangirls never see the light of day or to create solid bonds of solidarity? The ratio of Kunoichi to shinobi is 1 to 6. The corps is mainly male dominant, it can be quite difficult for young women to feel like they belong or could do as well as their male counterparts. While you’re an inspiration to many young girls Hokage-sama and so is Kushina-san, you both are apart of the rest and not very approachable because of your busy schedule.”

Everyone looked at him pensively. The idea had merit and both ladies present in the room along with the one female Anbu in the ceiling, liked that idea very much.

“While Koharu-sama is teaching the girls, Homura-sama could teach the boys on how to behave properly with clients. Be more respectful. Girls usually do better in that regard

instinctively. Boys on the other hand... They need to learn. I know it's the role of a jonin-sensei but if we can take care of that before the genins start taking missions it would be a small plus. Finally, Sandaime-sama, I was hoping you could teach them how to refine the elemental jutsus they have learned."

"Hmm. Why not?"

"That's an interesting idea you presented to us, Iruka." complimented Homura.

"That also allows you to connect with the youngest generation and perhaps bridge the generational gap." interjected Minato.

"I'm in favor of this. The three of you?"

Tsunade got an affirmation from each member of Team Hiruzen. When they discussed the survival outdoor classes next, Riku flashed in the office. Everyone turned towards him and noticed the crazed look in his eyes.

"I did it! It works!" he said and quickly approached his mother's desk, putting down the huge paper he had in hand. He threw four kunai with a tag attached to it at each corner of the room.

"Riku! Don't throw K-"

He made a hand seal sequence and an holographic display appeared on top of the paper with a huge complicated seal on it. It was similar to the display in the barrier core room, showing the entire village from a bird view. This time however, a 3D representation of the room was what they all could see.

"That's... interesting but what's the point of having a three dimensional representation of-"

"There is no chakra." interjected Iruka in both awe and perplexity. Everyone turned to him.

"Yes! None! The odds of the seals being detected is thus almost null! We get real time imagery of the area and can make better maps! Spy on what the enemy is doing without them even being aware!" the dirty blonde explained with excitement in his voice and began to cackle.

Tsuna stood from her seat and went to stand next to him.

"How does it work without chakra?"

"I'm curious about that too." said Hiruzen and everyone agreed with him.

“Well, the seal has chakra obviously but it doesn’t use chakra to sense. It just creates sound! Sound whose frequency is so high we can’t hear it! Nor see it obviously; it’s sound but the thing is, sound is... a wave! Kind of something tangible and intangible at the same time! When it hits an object it’s bounced back. That’s how bats see despite being blind! By interloping waves from different starting points we can recreate the environment in almost perfect detail! Now imagine thousands of those, scattered behind enemy lines with Botib everywhere! They could relay in real time information and act accordingly. Traps, troops movements, ambushes, none of them would work anymore. Genjutsu wouldn’t have any effect in hiding things. Secret passages, secret whatever..”

“It’s amazing, Riku. Is that all?”

“For that seal, yes but there is-.Ugh.”

No one said anything when Tsunade hit him behind the neck and knocked him unconscious. Riku needed a break and it was obvious to all present.

“It’s like seeing Tobirama-sensei with Hashirama-sama’s enthusiasm.” Koharu commented.

“Kami! You’re right!” Homura explained.

“Now that you said it...”

“I think it’s better if we stop here today.” Tsunade said and put Riku on her shoulders.

The meeting came to an abrupt end and the blonde mother went home to put her son in bed. The simple thought made her mentally laugh. This was a good thing, she hadn’t had the opportunity to feel amused ever since her return three months ago. Riku had been running himself to the ground between the creation of the new seals and the construction of the Botibs. She tasked Yugao and Kakashi to supervise him so he wouldn’t kill himself from overwork and to not let him use the Time seal, not even to sleep. At the rate he was going he would have been older than she was before the end of the year.

The only break he took was to work on Hinata’s and Karin’s rooms. The former was done but the latter was still a work in progress. From what he told her, since Karin wanted to be closer to her roots he created a seaside room. There is supposed to be a beach, and salt water with currents to recreate partly Uzushio. He had asked help from Kushina who knew better than anyone how the village had looked even though it’s been more than 16 years since she saw it.

Exiting her son’s bedroom after kissing his forehead, she went back to work. She studied Jirayia’s latest reports and they were not good. Iwa was militarizing and Kumo had gotten back their Jinchuriki. Apparently he had fooled Akatsuki and faked his capture to enjoy some freedom. B, as his name was, was the adoptive brother of the

Raikage and also a prisoner of his own village. When the opportunity to bail out and enjoy his freedom a bit presented itself, he took it. Once he had enough, he simply went back to Kumo. There had been no word of sighting nor rumors of 'Madara' and Zetsu, the two last members of Akatsuki and the most problematic ones. With their space-time jutsu they could come and go wherever they wanted whenever they wanted. Riku had created a seal to counter them but the opportunity to test it never presented itself. With the Rinnegan in their possession, She didn't dare think of what they would do with it. The interrogation of Hidan, the immortal one that nearly killed Hiruzen, had revealed nothing. Since the guy knew nothing and was swearing like a sailor and immortal, T&I requested to use him as a 'training dummy'. She had been disturbed by the request but allowed it. It wasn't like the man would die from the torture and didn't deserved it in the first place. She had heard that Anko was extremely pleased with her new toy.

When the day ended she went home and checked on Riku. He was still sleeping peacefully in his own bed and not even bothering to restrain herself joined him to cuddle. She hoped that with three wives he would still have time for this cuddling time they shared.

When morning came, Riku found himself alone. The scent of cloves he was so familiar with, told him that his mother had slept with him the previous night. Getting up, he began to think of the day's schedule then quickly stopped. Now that he found the solution to his problem, he just needed to create the seals. As such he wasn't really pressed by time anymore. Deciding to take a break at least for today, he took a quick shower and a quick breakfast and went to visit Ino. As usual she jumped him when she saw him and raped his mouth with her tongue.

"You know, more than the kiss, it's the happiness you show when you see me that's really getting me going. I can't help myself but take pride in thinking 'Yep, that's thanks to me, alright.'. It's addicting."

"I told you you were mine. Now you can't live without me anymore." she replied as she closed the door to the shop from the inside and dragged him into the backroom.

She hasn't seen him in weeks and was very sexually frustrated. She could have taken care of her needs herself or seek Hinata or Karin but she loved being all pent-up when she got together with Riku. She felt like the sex was better, more needy. Today she sure as hell was getting her bells rung.

"Hmm, No?" Riku told her when he grabbed her wrist as they reached for the belt on his pants.

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN, NO?!" was the shout that came through her luscious lips.

"I mean no."

"RIKU! I SWEAR TO GOD, IF YOU DON'T LET ME SUCK YOUR- KYAAAH!"

She yelled in surprise when her fiance picked her up and turned her upside down. Thanks to the gravity her skirt fell down and revealed her butt and her pussy. Immediately Riku put his mouth on the latter while forcefully grabbing the former. The effect was immediate and Ino put his head in a lock with her legs. She didn't know yet if she regretted not wearing underwear anymore when she wasn't leaving the village. It was in case Riku would make an impromptu visit just like this one. However what she had in mind was different. She would give him a blowjob and he would put his cock inside of her. That was their ritual.

"I'm still getting my snack and you're still going to fuck me afterwards!" she announced and freed his dick from his pants.

An hour later and a cum glazed Ino was in paradise. Resting her back on his chest she enjoyed the feeling of his hot seed on her skin.

"I'll never get tired of this."

"And I'll never get tired of how beautiful and happy you are like that."

"You think I'm beautiful like this?" she asked in wonder, turning her head to look at him. She got her answer when she felt his dick hardened again and poked her ass.

"Is that a good enough answer for you.?"

"It is. Shame I'm tapped out and I have work."

"It's fine. I have preparations to make anyway."

"Preparation for what?"

"Hinata. I'm asking her tonight."

The gasp followed by the squeal Ino let out was adorable in Riku's eyes.

"I can't wait for tomorrow so she can tell me how it went." the blonde said as she stood up and began to clean herself up. Riku got on his feet too, dropped a wooden shurifuin on the ground and flashed away with his fiance to his Botib. He led her to the bathroom to properly wash up and he brought her back to her shop's backroom.

When she began to dress, Riku embraced her from behind, capturing her breasts in his hands and began to play with her nipple.

"Baby... We don't have time, you said it yourself."

"I know but I just... they were there, so tempting."

"I find it amazing that you still love them despite Karin's, Hinata's and your mother's. Especially your mother's."

"It's not just the size that matters. The shape too. Yours are perfect." he explained as he kissed her neck. "I think your nipples are what I like the most about them. I just... want to abuse them."

"Oh, yeah? What would you do to them?" she inquired out of curiosity.

"...I'll put piercings on them."

"Really?"

"Hmm. They would look so good like that."

Ino looked down at her chest and wondered for a moment if her breasts would. The thought came and went however, she had to work. Finishing putting her clothes back on, she gave him a loving kiss and shooed him away with her hands.

"Go on, give Hinata the best night of her life."

Riku nodded and left the Yamanaka flower shop. He could have flashed to the hospital but decided against it and chose instead to walk down the streets of Konoha, enjoying the crowd of people coming and going to do business. Sometimes some people greeted him and he greeted back as if it was the most natural thing in the world. Months ago after the village's attack, he felt bitter about it. Now? The bitterness was still there but overwhelmed by a sense of accomplishment and tranquility. Before, spite had been his main motivator but that has changed. He had now people he loved and cared about, people that he wanted to protect and bit by bit the number of those people increased one after another.

He stopped to buy a bouquet of white Iris, restraining himself to facepalm for not having bought one from Ino. He then continued his stroll towards the hospital. When he got there he asked for the nurse of the reception's desk where his girlfriend was then thanked the woman. Hinata was on shift, having completed the course to become a nurse herself a couple of months back. He was both proud and happy for her. She was the very first Hyuga to make it to the medical field and that encouraged all the members of her family that had joined the medical program after things changed inside the clan. The byakugan had been a godsend to study diseases or wounds inside the body without the need to cut open people or the use of a diagnostic jutsu, the latter being rather difficult to learn.

He found her on the fourth floor in the nurse room, taking a break. When she saw him she politely excused herself from the conversation she was having with her fellow nurses and came to him. They shared a kiss and he offered her the iris.

“They’re beautiful, I love them.” she said with a smile and brought the bouquet to her nose to smell the flowers’ scent. “What is it for?”

“It’s a bit of an apology for being absent these past few months and also an invitation to a very romantic dinner tonight. Classy clothes only.”

“Classy clothes?” she inquired with a thin eyebrow raised, knowing that Riku didn’t care much about what she wore.

“And very sexy lingerie too.” he whispered in her ear. “Because tonight is even more special than usual.”

“... You mean-!”

“Yes.” the amused and knowing smile he gave her made it more real than his answer. Her heart began to heat faster and a furious blush appeared on her naturally pale face. “You’ve waited long enough. **We**’ve waited long enough.”

Hinata hugged him tightly and gave him a kiss.

“Tonight at 8? I’ll pick you up.”

She nodded and quickly retreated after another kiss when an emergency call came in. Her shift ended at 5. She had three hours to discuss things with Ino and Karin about what she should wear for that very important date. With a lot of anticipation and a bit of panic, Hinata went to answer the emergency call.

Chapter 64: Life is full of Surprise

“It’s done.”

Riku turned his head to look at Kakashi who had just finished burying deep in the ground a Botib. In the meantime he had been putting his new spying seal on a rock. Yugao was on the lookout for any one coming their way.

“How many does it make now and how many more do we have to do?”

“67 and 33.” Yugao answered as she got down from the boulder she had been standing on.

They've been at it for months now. Extending the whole web of bases and seals all around the bordering countries of the Land of Fire. Team Yukari, which had been reformed, was one of the ten teams charged with the task. Ame and Kusa had been

done quickly, those countries being small. They were now doing the Land of Waterfall that was twice the size of the two combines. It needed a lot more work.

That was on Iwa's front, on Kumo's front the Land of Hot Water was done too and so was the Land of Stairs. Waterfall was really the last country to be done. Afterward things would become more dangerous. The teams were supposed to infiltrate the land of Earth, Iwa's own territory, and do the job. The teams East would have an easier time with the Land of Frost being between Hot Water and Kumo.

"Alright, let's check if it works."

Riku grabbed his teammates and flashed away inside the Botib Kakashi had just buried, arriving in the main room. He went to the table in the middle and activated the seal matrix. Instantly a 3D map appeared in an hologram floating in the air and represented a ten km radius area. Riku touched the hologram with one hand while channeling chakra in a seal on the table. The map zoomed in until it was in the perspective of someone. Turning his hand left, the display turned left. He did the same thing from the three other directions and was satisfied with the results he got.

"Echo-location is working fine." he announced.

"...you loud and clear, Cove-01." Yugao replied to the side using the modified Hiraishin seal to communicate with the T&I operative located in Konoha.

"Is everything in order, Team Yukari?"

Yugao gave a look at Riku who gave a thumbs up.

"Yes. Everything is working fine on our side."

"Good. You have new orders from the top. You are to take a break and come back to Konoha. You've earned it."

"Understood."

"Advanced post LOF-W15 is currently free, you can arrive there, Team Yukari. See you soon."

LOF-W15 was code meaning Land Of Fire West base 15. They were created to serve as a stop gap in case the enemy found a Botib and discovered how to use the Hiraishin. As such no teleportation was allowed from outside the village to inside of it for security reasons. It wouldn't be good if the enemy arrived directly at the heart of Konoha.

Riku deactivated the map and put his hand on the seal on the left wall. He was joined by Kakashi and Yugao and each channeled a tiny bit of their chakra into it. A fraction of a

second later and they arrived at their destination. Konoha was only an hour away by tree hopping.

"I'll never stop being amazed by the whole system." Commented Kakashi as he made his way outside.

"Want to go back to Anbu to enjoy it properly?" Riku asked amusedly.

"Nah, those days are behind me."

"Yugao-chan?"

"Same. I'm very content to just be a regular jonin."

"A regular jonin-sensei." corrected the dirty blonde. The purple haired woman had finally taken the last step to become one and would soon get a team assigned to her in a couple months. "Already got your eyes on some young seeds?"

"One. He's not exactly the best student but he's dedicated to the sword. Should his team fail I may propose an apprenticeship to him."

"I'm not sure I like the idea of another younger man in your life that's not a bunshin of me." Riku confessed with a fake pout making Kakashi snort.

"Don't worry, you'd always been my favorite." the kunoichi replied with an amused smile.

"I better."

"Besides, I thought you'd be too busy with your fiancées. How many does that make now? Six?"

"More like Six thousand." joked Kakashi.

"THREE! It's three! Where the hell did you come up with that number from?" Riku protested looking at the fake cyclops.

"Pretty sure most of the female population from 12 to 40 is hoping to be the next."

"Taicho is not wrong. I heard plenty of talks in some circles."

"They're all going to be disappointed."

"A shame or maybe not. Too many mini-you would be catastrophic."

"Oh yeah? What about you? Any mini-Kakashi in sight?"

“Mah~ Children are not in the cards for me. I’d have to start a serious relationship to begin with.”

“Like with Shizune?”

Yugao suddenly saying Riku’s senpai’s name made Kakashi almost miss the tree branch he landed on.

“Holy shit! Senpai and you?! How did that happen? No wait, I know! You met while buying the latest edition of Icha Icha, I bet!”

“They did.”

“Can’t say you two perverts don’t fit well together.”

Kakashi’s lone visible eyes twitched and he went on the offensive.

“What about you Yugao? How is love life?”

Now it was Riku that nearly missed a tree branch. Ever since Hayate’s death six years ago, he had avoided that particular topic with his friend.

“I tried dating a bit but...” she let out a disappointed sigh and didn’t speak further.

“Who is dumb enough to mess up their chance with the prettiest kunoichi in the village? I want names!”

“So some poor shinobis would end up missing?” inquired Kakashi playfully.

“Yea- No! I mean no, of course not! I just want to... hm, know? Out of curiosity?”

Yugao chuckled at Riku selling himself out. It warmed her heart that he was ready to ‘disappear’ anyone who hurt her.

“How about you focus on your love life instead of mine? I remember that Karin is still waiting for you to ask her.” she reminded him.

Hinata’s proposal had been magical for her. A romantic dinner and some dancing in the Gazebo on top of the fake lake he had created and right under the light of a fake full moon had been quite the hit. So was the nightly activities afterwards, Riku had never seen Hinata so unhinged during sex. The moon princess that was love first sex second, had been quite aggressive when he gave her the ring, immediately dragging him to the bedroom to officialise their engagement between them. Saying that Riku had been shocked to see his now fiancée act like Ino usually did was an understatement. She expected a bit of stuttering and a few tears of happiness not to be ridden like a horse hours on end. He had nothing to complain about though, except Karin’s expectations,

probably going through the roof and dropping hints that she wanted her turn to come soon. It's been three months and Riku shuddered at what his redhead was going to say for making her wait so long.

"Everything is ready. I finished it last week."

"Maybe you'd survive then. Sensei nearly got himself killed when he didn't propose when Kushina-san expected him to." Riku's face paled as both his teammates snickered.

When they arrived at Konoha, they went straight to see Tsunade to give her their report.

"So all South-West and the West of Waterfall are covered." the blonde woman mused.

"Yes, Hokage-sama. We still have to cover the North-West."

"Alright. That makes Earth the last incursion. The team in charge of Frost began ten days ago. Good work. Until further notice you're on standby." That shocked them all. The operative they talked to had spoken about a break but not the end of the mission for them. Knowing they'd be confused, Tsunade explained herself. "Naruto is finally getting around some things and I decided to give him a bit of freedom. He's still restricted to the village and with a Hiraishin tag on him but he can freely use chakra. I want you to get him back into the lifestyle slowly, Kakashi."

"Understood, Hokage-sama."

It's been a harsh battle to make Naruto realize that Sasuke had never been a friend and that he shouldn't stay hanged on him or his death. While under house arrest, plenty of friends visited him to spend time or just talk. The realization that the Uchiha wouldn't have done it at all began to make him think.

"Yugao, T&I could use your expertise with the system, mainly to train others about how to operate it. It's not an order, you're free to return to your usual duties if you wish to. As for you, Riku, you're to go home and rest. Tomorrow there is a special project I want you to work on from now on."

The young man in question raised an eyebrow out of curiosity but nodded. Tsunade dismissed them and each member of the team went their own way. Riku didn't immediately go home. He went to see Karin and Hinata at the hospital since it was the closest to the Hokage Tower and was unfortunately told that they weren't working today. His next destination was the Yamanaka flower shop. He met Noriko there and talked with her for a bit. To his disappointment his future mother-in-law told him that Ino wasn't there either. A bit dejected, Riku made it home. It was too late for lunch but too early for dinner yet he was starving. Not wanting to go out again for food he went to the kitchen and was pleasantly surprised to see Hinata present and cooking something.

“Hinata!” he exclaimed and was on her before she could realize what was happening.

“Welcome home, Ri-kun.” she greeted him with a very happy and pleased smile. A bit amused too as her fiancée was burying his face into the crook of her neck.

“Hmm. I missed you, I missed this.”

“I can tell.”

Chuckling, she pulled his head away despite how good she felt from the kisses he had begun to rain on her neck. She gave him a heartfelt kiss and turned around to face him. He could see the mirth and happiness in her eyes.

“Did mom tell you I’d be coming home today?”

“She did not, no.”

“Then how come you’re here and cooking? Not that I dislike it, quite the contrary but I’m curious.”

“I live here. Since two weeks ago.”

He was gobsmacked at the news, why did his mother not tell him?

“That’s great!”

“But you have a lot of questions.”

“You know me well.” he chuckled and rubbed his nose against hers.

“My clan is doing more than fine and I believe it was time for me to move in. Especially regarding the recent development.”

“If you mean our engagement it’s not really-”

His eyes grew wide in shock and he was struck speechless when Hinata took his hand and put it over her womb. She didn’t say anything, she just smiled from ear to ear at him and Riku couldn’t help himself but smiled back stupidly in return.

“Y-you.. We... Baby? For real?” he asked with enthusiasm and she nodded.

That was the last thing she did before she was picked up in the hair and swung around. She couldn’t help herself and giggled. Riku put her down and kissed her with every ounce of love he had for her. It was quite heated and soon, his hands began to explore her body, trying to remove her clothes.

“Not yet!” she said as she pulled away from his clutches. “Cooking, then dinner first.”

“B-but.”

“Nu-huh. Your mother will be home soon.”

“Does she know?”

“No. I wanted you to be the first I told.”

“We really made that night magical didn’t we?”

“That we did.”

“Come on. No cooking tonight, we’re celebrating.”

Riku created a kage bunshin who expressly began to pack everything Hianta had been doing and put it in the fridge. In the meantime he had removed Hinata’s apron and dragged her outside by the hand. He didn’t intend to have dinner outside but to get food on the take-out. They walked down the restaurant streets and Hinata looked at each menu presented in front of the establishment before setting her choice on one called ‘Konoha’s delights’. She took a simple omurice and of course cinnamon rolls for dessert. Riku for his part took two servings of Katsudon for himself and chicken breast for his mother. For both of them he took a kabocha squash pie for desserts. On their way home Riku stopped quickly at a store to buy something that he refused to show Hinata. When they got home, they were right behind Tsunade.

“Searching for someone?” he said and his mother turned around.

“The two of you, yes. I would have thought that you would have dragged her to your room.” she replied amusedly.

“I was denied because ‘my mother would be home soon’. We went to buy dinner instead.”

He raised his hand holding the bag with the food and Tsunade snatched it to see what was inside. Appreciative of the food selection, she went to the dining room, took a seat and began to distribute it. She was confused when she pulled out knitting needles and a ball of wool.

“It’s for you.” Riku said, biting his lip to not laugh at the unamused face Tsunade made.

“I’m way too young to begin knitting.”

“True but from what I heard, all grandmothers knit for their grandchildren.”

“Don’t call me gr-”

Her neurons connected and her eyebrows raised so high they almost disappeared into her hairline. The stupid happy faces of her son and her soon to be daughter-in-law, told her it wasn’t a joke. When realization dawned on her, she sported a stupid smile too and let out a huge squeal before rising from her chair and went to hug Hinata.

“Congratulations!”

“Thank you.” Replied the bluenette.

“That’s what the food is for? Celebrating?”

“You got it, mom.”

“Ooooooh. I’ve been a mom for a bit more than a year and now I’m going to be a grandmother. I...”

She didn’t quite know what to say. She was so very happy that she began to cry and sob. If six years ago someone had told her that her life would change for the better she would have punched that person into orbit. But ever since she met Riku, life has been good to her. There have been some downs but mostly, it was all ups. And now? Now she was about to become a grandmother. The Senju clan wouldn’t go extinct but lived on. She couldn’t help but feel emotional about it.

“Tsunade-sama?”

Shizune had gotten home from the hospital at that moment and her eyes had caught Tsunade’s crying right out of the bat. She feared the worst at first but the happy smile everyone was sharing quickly dismissed her worries. It just left her confused.

“I’m going to be a grandmother, Shizune!”

The ravenette froze on the spot then, much like her sensei, squealed and went to hug her, then Hinata and finally Riku.

“I’m honestly surprised it took you so long to knock one of the girls up.” Shizune chided her kohai by hitting him gently with an elbow.

“That’s exactly what I said to mom one time when she said to use protection when Hinata had her first sleepover.” Riku joked and made Tsunade snort. “I told her that If I didn’t you and I would have already had children all over the house.” he explained to the ones not in on the joke.

“Huh. We certainly would have.”

They sat down and ate, Riku giving his second portion of Katsudon to Shizune. They talked about many things which included baby names, wishes for the sex of the baby and how they would deal with the living arrangements. They didn't talk way into the night but instead planned a reveal party with very close friends.

Chapter 65: New discoveries

"We were right."

"Indeed. You think that's it? That this... double helix contains blueprints for... everything?"

Tsunade wondered aloud, looking at the imagery in front of her, Karin and Riku. A double helix they had found by zooming in the nucleus of a cell.

"Possibly. We'd know for sure if we made some comparison. Between others time of cells from the same sources, then from cells coming from another test subject of the same species then from a different species. Can you imagine what we would be able to do if we were right?" replied Riku to his mother.

"At the very least understand what does what and try to modify it in favor of healing. Regenerating a missing body part from just this by stimulating the cellular division in the way we want..."

"More than that we may be able to understand kekkei genkai and maybe replicate them." added Karin.

It's been three months since they started working on this. It hadn't been easy to create a microscope able to zoom way further than what it could actually do. Nor was it easy to determine what they were seeing. They succeeded however, and now a whole new branch of possibilities offered itself for them to explore.

"Those are questions for tomorrow. I'm beat and wouldn't mind going home." Riku commented and both women had to agree. They've been at it for hours today and they were tired.

Karin and Riku walked home hand in hand like the engaged couple they were. After the news of Hinata's pregnancy was shared he had quickly made his proposal to Karin to not make her feel left out and because as time passed, Hinata would need more of his time. The redhead had waited long enough already so he gave up on some functionalities of her room that still needed to be made, like the artificial sea breeze.

When it was time, he didn't make a romantic dinner for her like he did for Ino or Hinata. Instead it was more like a romantic date at the beach. With fun and games, a picnic and a lot of swimming. When Riku revealed to her that the room was actually a reconstitution of a beach from Uzushio, the redhead's heart melted. She had always wanted to go there but was never able to.

As a consequence of their relatively close blood relation and their time spent together working on seals or dealing with the Kyubi's chakra, Karin listened to many tales and stories Kushina knew about their homeland. Their bond became even stronger for multiple reasons. The first one was of course how alike they both were. From the Adamantine sealing chains, to being a jinchuriki of the Kyuubi, having a short fuse temper, being fascinated by fuinjutsu most notably pure sealing and barrier and finally for falling in love with a girly man genius. The only physical point in common was the color of their hair but if no one was paying attention to it they would have thought they were mother and daughter or sisters. The last point that brought them closer together was that Naruto wasn't that interested in the Uzumaki clan. Sure, he loved the stories but that was it. He was born in Konoha and breathed Konoha. Uzushio was just a distant thing for him. Karin on the other hand and much like Kushina was not from Konoha at all. She hated Kusa and never considered it her home, dreaming instead of the Uzumaki's home. When she migrated to Konoha, she came to see it as such but she already had an attachment to her clan and their history.

Seeing and hearing the length at which Riku went to recreate a piece of her motherland she always wanted to see, Karin didn't even bother saying 'yes' to his marriage proposal and fucked him right on the spot on the sand. It was only the day after when they woke up in each other arms in a bed that she finally gave him a proper answer. As a result, she never left the Senju manor and started to live there with Hinata.

That decision made Ino quite jealous and she finally accepted after nearly a year of engagement to move in. Each lady had a room of her own that Riku had expanded and which had direct access to his own bedroom. They didn't have any schedule of who would spend the night with him beyond the single day reserved for the cuddling night with Tsunade and when one of the three wanted to spend the night alone with Riku. It was mostly for Hinata, Ino not caring if her friends saw her fuck their fiance or if they joined and Karin rarely wanting to spend time alone with Riku without the others.

Tsunade was more than happy to have more family living inside the manor with a grandchild on the way. When she learned that Shizune had a thing with Kakashi she subtly pushed her to tie the lazy man down and to give her another grandchild too. She was being so relentless that Shizune was rarely home nowadays. Riku didn't know if his mother tactics worked and Shizune shacked up with his fake cyclops of a teammate or if it didn't and shacked up with Yugao, the actual cyclops of Team Yukari or moved in Karin's former place.

When they got home they were surprised by the presence of Kushina and Minato. The man had been both happy to know he was going to be a grandfather and was also

completely freaking out because technically, he was just 25. He had of course got to meet all his future daughters-in-law since his resurrection but only Karin did he get to really know because of the time spent with his wife and talking about fuinjutsu. Ino and Hinata were merely acquaintances and after checking with Kushina (who bonked him on the head for even asking) decided to change that, especially now that Hinata was entering her third semester and was showing greatly.

That didn't quite answer why the Uzumaki couple were doing here today.

"Helping with the final touch of wedding's preparation." Kushina had answered with nonchalance as it was the most obvious thing in the world.

With Hinata pregnant, Riku had insisted they should be married before the birth of the children. Yes, children. Hinata may have taken her physique after her mother but it seems, like just her paternal grandmother, she got the possibility to have twins. Hiashi, who had been quite murderous for a few months when he heard that his eldest **unwed** daughter was pregnant, calmed down when he realized that one: he was going to be grandfather. Two: because the twins reminded him of his own brother. Now that the cage bird seal was no more and that there was no more branch of the Hyuga clan, the man had felt immense relief at the knowledge that no more twins would have their special bonds torn apart because of tradition; like his and Hizashi had been. He decided to see it as a sign from Kami that everything was going well for his clan.

The marriage would be in a week's time. A small ceremony with only family and really close friends who were invited and would take place in the Senju Manor's big garden in the backyard. Of course the wedding triggered Ino's inner and outer princess and she went all out. She was so crazy and hyper active, that Hinata tried her best to hide from her in those moments. Riku's moon princess wanted something simple but quiet and pretty and that was it.

"Final touch?" Riku inquired, curious. As far as he knew, everything had been ready. From the invitations to the cake.

"That's a surprise." the redhead replied.

"Know anything about this?" he tried with Minato, who entered the dining room behind Hinata and carried the food.

"Nope. And even if I did, I like to live too much to spill the beans." the man replied and Kushina quickly changed the topic of discussion.

"So, Karin. Any news to share? Like the Uzumaki clan gaining a new member in a few months?"

"It's a bit too soon to-"

"You're pregnant." interjected Tsunade. Her words silenced everyone in the room in shock from the defacto tone she had used.

"H-How do you know?"

"I'm a sage, I know things." replied the blonde woman with a knowing smirk. It was wiped out of her face and replaced by a pout with her son's words.

"Sensing? It really allows you to know if someone is pregnant or not? Interesting."

"Wait! So Karin is really..." Ino asked and Tsunade nodded in confirmation.

The young redhead was dumbfounded but a stupid pleased smile adorned her lips. Riku had gotten up to reach Karin for a loving hug but Ino was faster.

"We're going to have another baby!" she squealed in delight.

"We?" Riku wondered aloud wondering what his sun princess meant by that.

"Of course **we**. I consider any child from Karin and Hinata mine too."

"And vice versa." added Hinata.

Karin being an Uzumaki and Uzumaki being very family oriented she agreed with this.

They had a good time during dinner and when it was time for, Riku made shadow clones so none of his fiancées would sleep alone. None of the girls cared if they had the original or not and didn't even bother to find out. The clone with Hinata was rubbing cream on her pregnant belly that he found simply beautiful. The one with Ino had dispelled on her orders; she wanted to spend the night alone. The one with Karin was facing her and they talked lovingly about the baby they were going to have. That left the original with Tsunade, falling asleep, cuddling to her and sucking on her tits.

Only Ino out of the three knew of his activities with his mother and kept quiet about it for obvious reasons. As far as the others knew, Mother and son were just cuddling (which was what they were actually doing most of the time) and found it cute. Only because they were making up for lost time and bonded that way.

When Kushina had heard about this during a conversation with Karin, she became instantly jealous. She wished she could do that with Naruto but she knew it wouldn't go well with him. She missed the time she never got to have to create a solid bond with her own son. Or rather a more solid one. Her relationship with Naruto was really good despite him being an adult and rather independent. He never forgot to tell her he loved her. Always gave her a hug or a kiss on the cheek. Still she wanted more out of it, she wanted the experience of being a mother proper, like Tsunade. Secretly she was reconsidering her stance on not having further children.

Time passed quickly and the day of the wedding arrived. The ceremony was a quick affair witnessed by many. On his side of the family, Riku had his parents, Nartuo and Kushina, Yugao, Kakashi, Shizune, Izumo and Kotetsu and Hiruzen who had received a special invitation. On Hinata's side was her father, Hanabi, Neji and Tenten who came as his girlfriend, Kurenai and Asuma and of course Shino and Kiba. The latter had tried to make threats to Riku but Shino got him away before he got himself into trouble. The Inuzuka was still holding a torch for Hinata and was quite jealous of Riku having a 'harem', as he called it.

While the ceremony (which had been officiated by Hiruzen as a former Hokage) was quick, the festivities weren't. The wedding started right before noon and lasted well into the night. Before they went to bed, Hinata shared her decision to Riku about where she wanted her hiraishin seal to be on her body. She took her time to decide but she realized that the answer had been obvious: on her heart. Riku immediately picked up a brush, some chakra ink and put it on her left breast. He then activated the seal which disappeared under her skin.

When morning came Senju Hinata was so happy with her life that she didn't want to open her eyes and start her days. Unfortunately for her, her bladder who was heavily squished by the babies decided otherwise. That was how her married life started. A trip to the bathroom. Thankfully she had a very good husband who carried her there and then back to bed.

"A ryo for your thoughts, Lady Senju." Riku, asked his wife. He was half sitting in bed with Hinata leaning against his chest. He was rubbing gently her belly while resting his chin on the top of her head.

"That I'm happy. That I love my life right now and wouldn't change a thing for anything in the world."

"I think the same with one exception. I'd like those two to already be here with us." he replied, feeling one of the babies kick, bringing a smile to his face. "Did you finally decide where you wanted to give birth?"

"Here, at the manor. Your mother said it was a Senju tradition."

"She didn't force or guilt trip you did she?"

"No but I like the idea. The hospital feels so... impersonal for it."

"Any idea what you want for their bedroom?"

"Hmm. No. I'd like to talk about this later."

"Then we will. Now, I think we should get up before someone comes and bothers us."

Hinata nodded and with difficulty got out of bed. Riku did the same and both went hand in hand to the kitchen to have some breakfast. To their surprise, especially Riku, it wasn't Shizune behind the stove but Tsunade.

"You know how to cook?!"

"Of course, I know. Why are you so shocked?" his mother replied, not turning her head to greet them and instead focused on what was in the pan.

"It's the first time in six years I've seen you cook."

"If that bothers you so much you can..." Her tirade was stopped before it could even start with a hug from behind and a kiss to her cheek.

"I'm surprised, that's all. There is nothing more to it."

His mother's cooking was such a novel concept, he wasn't about to say or do anything that would stop it. He had to admit it wasn't horrible but it wasn't the best out there. Tsunade had cooked for him and Hinata and that's all that mattered for him. Soon enough the trio was joined by the rest of their roommates and everyone went to start their day.

Riku and Karin went to the lab and started to study their discovery further regarding what they had found out about the cells a week prior. So far they have determined that the helixes were linked by two types of bonds from a total of four of what they named nucleotides, in a certain sequence. From there they began to record the entire sequence of each of their what they had named 'genome', to make a comparison and determine which did what. That was a titanesque work and both agreed they couldn't do that by hand. Seals had to be involved in the sequencing which started a whole new lot of research on how they could do that.

"We're going to be on this for months if not years." commented Riku.

"Yep. So much fun to have."

Riku didn't share his lack of enthusiasm with his fiancée but wisely kept his mouth shut.