

## Exile

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# Exile

by [Voglioungufo](#)

## Summary

### Role reversal AU

Everyone knows the story of Naruto, Sasuke and Sakura as it was written.

But what if Iruka had never been Naruto's teacher?

What if Sasuke never lost his clan, betrayed by his brother?

What if Shisui hadn't given up for the sake of Konoha?

What if Obito, having abandoned the Tsuki no Me plan, took Naruto with him?

What if Sakura, tired of being underestimated by her teacher, decides to give up everything to become stronger?

It would be another story, the story I want to tell you ...

## Notes

A bit of coordinates to better understand this RoleSwap! AU:

- "Role Swap" means: exchanged roles. It is that trope where the role of the characters (antagonist, protagonist, good, bad ...) is exchanged between them;
- In this story, Iruka was never a teacher at the Academy. He is a normal chūnin and has not had a chance to help Naruto;
- Obito has discovered the true plan of Black Zetsu and all the implications behind the Tsuki no Me, which he decides not to implement anymore;
- The Uchiha massacre does not happen, on the other hand Shisui after Danzo steals his eye instead of committing suicide decides to leave the village and becomes a miss-nin.

Other small notes:

- There is an original character in the "new" team 7, Sarutobi Himawari. I assure you that it is not a self-insert, it will be a secondary character but she has a specific role in the growth of Sasuke and Sakura;
- Same-sex relationships are easily accepted in the shinobi world, except that there are no marriages and for this reason the families of the clans put a lot of pressure on the children to marry and carry on the lineage. Trivially it is a bit like in Classical Greece, only it is a less institutionalized practice;
- In the story, a child begins to be considered an adult when he becomes a ninja (otherwise the age remains 18 for civilians);
- Couples ... HAHHAHAHAHA I have no idea, so I have not entered. The only certain ones are the ShiIta and the KakaIta that yes, as you can see, it is a bit of a triangle. I know many do not like them, but I ask you to have faith for this idea that I have in mind, I swear you will not

regret and pining with me and Itachi hahahaha. And you will surely see SakuHina too, I have a very special idea for Sakura that I hope you will like!

# Prologue

The entire village was illuminated by the rays of the full moon, which cast out the shadows and laid bare every alley. It was a bad night to escape, but there wasn't much time left before the ROOT agents intercepted him.

From the top of the roof, Shisui turned only one last fleeting glance in the direction of the Hokages' faces and realized he didn't feel even an ounce of regret. All he felt was *anger*, burning anger running through his blood.

And treason.

He reached out to the bandage, his fingers pressing against the empty socket. It was still throbbing deaf, aching from the sharp wound that he hadn't had time to carefully dress.

He made a face and, no longer looking back, regardless of the pain and fatigue that was shaking his whole body, he concentrated his chakra in a snap. Shunshin had always been the technique he most excelled at, but exhausted as he was, he quickly brought him to his knees when he stopped beyond the gates of Konoha. He coughed violently, the only remaining eye squeezing tears of pain; his chakra coils still appeared to be deeply damaged. He didn't care when the grass was stained with blood.

"Don't try too hard."

Beyond the pitiful condition he was in, Shisui was able to react quickly to the strange voice. He pulled out the tantō he was holding on his shoulders, that single gesture made his vision blur. He relaxed only when he recognized the black cape, with the motif of red clouds, that the man who appeared out of nowhere was wearing.

He sheathed his short sword as he raised his head and realized that the man - Uchiha Madara or Uchiha Obito, this had yet to be clarified - was not wearing the typical tiger mask with which he had seen him lately. It was the first time he had seen his face and his expression looked very tired, but also very resolute.

"We match," Shisui commented jokingly, pointing to the other's missing eye.

Obito did not answer, humorless. He moved towards him and Shisui could see that a blond child was clinging to his shoulders, with lively blue eyes looking at him uncertain and curious. He didn't have to see the mustache scars on his face to recognize him, the Kyūbi's Jinchūriki was very good at standing out and getting noticed.

He didn't ask why he was with them. Indeed, it was quite obvious that the missing nin's original plan was to steal one of Konoha's most valuable assets. Shisui had happened almost by accident.

An error.

"Let's go," Obito called.

With a last spark of hesitation, he looked at the gloved hand that the man offered him. For a moment he thought he saw Itachi's mild, gentle face, the smile that formed when he offered him dango.

It only took a pulse in the empty orbit to remind him why he was doing it.

He grabbed the hand with a firm squeeze.

The second after an unknown force was dragging him into thin air.

\*\*

Kakashi was tired after five days of uninterrupted hunting. He had been at the forefront of Uchiha Shisui's research, sending his pack even across the border of the Land of Fire.

It was obvious he had been chosen for that task: he was an excellent ANBU, a better tracker than the Inuzuka and a sharingan owner; that was a very rare combination, which on missions like this was not wasted.

But it had been useless.

Five days later no one had been able to track down Shisui. Its scent stopped just beyond the gates of Konoha, as if from that point on it had been swallowed by nothing. This was precisely what worried Kakashi: people simply could not disappear, even the most skilled of shinobi would leave a trail behind. Especially considering that the searches had started instantly, it was impossible that the wind had dispersed the smell in a few hours.

But Kakashi was tired and paid no attention to any of these concerns while reporting to the Hokage about his failure. He had returned from an undercover mission in Kumo when the search had started and obviously he hadn't been able to escape. Fatigue now demanded that his body rest.

But when the Hokage dismissed him, he did not teleport directly to his apartment.

He moved on the roofs of the city, let his chakra expand lazily in search of the dark and mischievous one of the Kyūbi. The sense of alarm was activated at the exact moment he realized he couldn't sense it, not in the whole village.

A dark premonition began to make his heart beat faster, but he did not listen and drove it away from his mind. Instead, he changed the direction of his jumps and headed quickly towards the apartment building where sensei's son had been stationed.

It was enough for him to land on the balcony to realize that the apartment was empty. He then slipped unscrupulously into it from the window.

It was messy, as always. But there were fewer clothes on the floor, the sink was not full of ramen cups and the garbage smelled too much - as if it hadn't been thrown away for several days. There was not even the night hat with which he had seen him sleeping, he did not find the backpack and there were no shoes.

He just opened the fridge to understand what had happened: it was empty, except for an expired milk carton.

Naruto was gone.

He didn't know how he managed to stay calm, how he could even coolly consider the various clues when his heart seemed to want to escape from his chest. He cut his hand with a kunai and slammed it hard on the table. With a puff of smoke a pug appeared on the shelf, eyes tired and exasperated, while the rest of the pack spread out on the floor, all in the same battered condition.

"Boss, I understand the emergency situation, but ..."

"Pakkun", Kakashi interrupted, "I need you to go to the Hokage and tell him that Naruto is gone. The rest: with me, look for his scent and follow it."

He had given the order in a controlled voice, in a cold tone that did not allow replies, but despite this, the agitation that swirled inside the young man was all too clear to his pack. He was in terrible conditions, with his chakra near exhaustion. It was for this reason that Pakkun did not protest and did what was ordered.

Kakashi didn't stay a second too long in the apartment. Confident in Pakkun, he left the apartment and followed the pack that began to search for the scent of Naruto, ignoring all other fragrances. Kakashi could not perceive even a faint trace of it and this frightened him: how long had it been gone and no one had noticed?

The pack took him to an area he had beaten a lot in recent days, just outside the walls.

"The smell stops there, boss," Urushi informed. "There are two other smells, one unknown and the other is what you have already made us look for".

There was no need to specify it. After all, Kakashi had understood everything when the pack stopped to smell the exact same point where even the smell of Shisui disappeared.

That awareness increased the tachycardia. All the heaviness of chakra consumption fell upon him and his vision began to fail, his legs trembled.

Five days. Naruto had been missing for five days and no one had noticed. The Hokage, who had promised that his sensei's son was safe, knew nothing. He didn't know that Shisui ...

"He kidnapped Naruto," he only managed to say before his vision darkened and he fell to the ground.

But even in his unconsciousness that last thought devoured his mind.

He had lost Naruto, the last link with his old team.

He had failed again.

# The girl with the fox smile

## Chapter Summary

"Well, I'm a ninja," he finally said, shrugging his shoulders with pride. He also tapped on his forehead, showing the symbol of Konoha.

Konan did not give him the admiring look he was used to receiving, rather she looked rather darkly at the symbol of the stylized leaf.

"Um ..." she hummed.

"What's up?" he muttered annoyed by the unenthusiastic reaction.

"Shinobis bring death" was the simple and grim answer. "I do not like them".

## Chapter Notes

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

## FOUR YEARS LATER

He had been fixed under the sundial for an hour now, frowning at the too slow shadow. He couldn't wait for the time to return to Konoha.

Which was inconsistent with what he had wanted the day before, which was when Sasuke had prayed for Team 7 to be assigned a mission outside the village. His mistake had been to believe that the missions outside the Konoha border were all above grade D.

Error.

The Hokage still managed to find something harmless and boring.

Grade D Mission: Help a villager carry bags to a village less than thirty kilometers from Konoha.

Sasuke wondered how he hadn't died of boredom yet.

More enthusiastic about the mission had been her teammates, Haruno Sakura and Sarutobi Himawari, who once found out about the festival held in the village had pleaded with Kakashi-sensei to be allowed to stay for the afternoon.



Kakashi-sensei was, from his point of view, so silly that he shrugged in assent before disappearing somewhere with his disgusting porn books.

Somehow he had managed to escape from the overly enthusiastic clutches of his companions and had beaten a strategic retreat on the roof of one of the houses. From where he was he still got the cheerful noises of the festival and the inviting smells of the food stalls, but he didn't get out of there.

He was a ninja. He was on a mission. Not on vacation.

There were certainly better ways to occupy the time, even without missions to carry out. He was twelve years old now, an adult, and certain childhood interests should no longer interest him.

For this he stared at the sundial fixed on the house opposite, waiting for the moment when they could leave.

He was so concentrated in staring at the advance of the shadow, that he did not notice anything until someone fell on him. It was so sudden that not even his ninja reflexes could stop him from being stretched out under another body.

A female body, judging by the soft shapes that pressed against him.

Unceremoniously, he shook off the girl who had tripped over him.

"What the heck!" he snapped.

"I'm sorry!"

Finally Sasuke was able to turn around to see his attacker's face. The girl seemed to be a little older than him, with a slimmer and softer shape due to the breasts that were beginning to accentuate. The face, however, was still very childish, with large blue eyes and round cheeks. She had long hair that, despite an attempt to tie it in two ponytails, fell unkempt in a fringe on her face. She had no forehead cover, but she wore gaudy civilian clothes.

*Who with common sense wears orange clothes?!*

He made a face ready to respond piqued, but his every attempt was drowned out by sudden angry screams.

"There it is!"

Sasuke's attention shifted from the girl's face to a group of burly and rather angry men climbing up the various roofs and terraces to reach them.

At that call, the girl's expression filled with fear. Sasuke only realized at that moment that she had also dropped a box of take-out ramen when she hit him.

"Dattebayo!" the girl swore.

That expression that meant nothing caused a bell to ring in Sasuke's mind, but he couldn't stop for more than a second, as the girl took him by the hand.

"What?"

"Run!"

And before he could protest the complete stranger who had fallen upon him out of nowhere was dragging him along the terrace where he had taken refuge. She had picked up the bowl of ramen and was holding it tightly to her chest with the other hand, as if her life waned.

"Get her!"

"Don't let her get away!"

"Thief!"

Screamed the men behind them. But their words didn't worry Sasuke much, what worried him was the end of the terrace approaching too fast. His body acted on instinct, kneading enough chakra on his feet before jumping onto the roof of the other building.

The girl landed elegantly, immediately resuming running without difficulty. Sasuke, on the other hand, almost fell from the awkward landing and being pulled forward. He blushed at his own awkwardness, but it wasn't his fault! Kakashi-sensei had just started teaching them chakra jumps, he was still practicing.

"Oy! Let me go!" he snapped.

"Run!" instead she urged him once more.

The girl's grip was firm, not to the point that it hurt but enough that it was impossible for him to free himself, especially while he was busy running and jumping. He was consoled, however, that after jumping a couple of times from one house to another his landings had become more stable.

Their run ended when the girl slid both of them through the thick branches of a tree, placing them both poised on a branch. Sasuke was out of breath and for this the girl hastened to cover his mouth with one hand. He looked at her in outrage, eyes wide open. He hated physical contact with other people, the only ones allowed to touch him were his mother and brother. He felt profound discomfort at the way this stranger had broken down the invisible wall of his personal space.

He stared at her with his brow furrowed in annoyance, but she was too busy checking her breathing and spying on her pursuers. They too had come down from the houses and gathered right under the tree.

"Have you seen her?"

"She came down from here!"

“Keep looking for her”.

Sasuke found himself hoping they didn't look up, the leaves didn't hide them so well especially because of the girl's ridiculously colored clothes. Then he felt stupid for that thought, he didn't need to hide! He had been forced to do it!

"She must still be around here."

"Find her!"

"For beyond!"

Meanwhile the men below continued. Sasuke internally breathed a sigh of relief as they began to walk away without peering at the tree - a really beginner's mistake. The girl waited a few more minutes and, when she was sure they were no longer in the area, she stopped pressing her hand to his mouth. Finally free from constraint, Sasuke jumped to the ground.

The girl immediately followed, landing like a cat.

"What the hell...!" Sasuke started angry, but his sentence broke off midway when the girl handed him the bowl of ramen.

“I'm sorry for involving you,” she said seriously, an apologetic smile and blue eyes staring at him absurdly happy. "To make up for it if you want I can share the ramen with you!"

Sasuke stared at the girl's face and the ramen alternating, wondering what it was to be so happy about and why make such a proposal.

"I don't like ramen," he replied piqued.

The girl's expression went from happy to incredulous and finally furious.

"Whaaaat ?!" she blurted out too loudly, pointed her index finger at him as if she were accusing him of murder. "How dare you? Ramen is the dish of the gods! "

"Is that why you stole it?"

The girl froze and Sasuke had to bite himself in order not to smile in victory. He had heard well what the merchants they fled from had called it.

She lowered the offer of ramen, withdrawing it towards her chest, and even her gaze became more bitter.

"No," she replied quietly, in a more contained tone. "I stole it because I was *hungry*".

Sasuke felt bad and a little guilty at that answer. It was not what he expected and he did not know how to reply.

“You could have bought it then”.

The girl looked at him with mockery.

"Sure, with the air" he joked sarcastically, then specified perhaps thinking he was stupid: "I have no money."

He struggled to hold back a grimace. Part of him understood the girl's situation, but stealing was still something wrong, something his moral conception did not hold right. But he also didn't think it right for a little girl to starve.

He looked for something to say but he couldn't think of anything, he felt pretty pathetic and it was a feeling he hated. Especially since the only times he felt this way was when his father compared him to Itachi; the rest of the time he was always praised, the best in everything, and he was always right.

The girl's gaze weakened the longer he was silent, losing that brilliance it had when she had made the offer. She looked very dejected now, but in an almost resigned way.

He saw her open her mouth to say something, then quickly preceded her.

"Okay," he said, then turned around so as not to show the blush on his cheeks. "I will share your ramen".

He heard a quick shuffle as the girl reached him, her mouth wide open in a perfect oval.

"Really?" she asked as if she could hardly believe it.

He accentuated his haughty expression, pointing out that he was only doing her a favor.

"Yup. We are looking for a bench to sit on ”.

The girl's face became radiant, her eyes bright again. Then she folded her lips into a grin reminiscent of foxes and before Sasuke knew it she was tapping her index finger on his back.

"Are you an Uchiha, huh?"

He jumped to get away from that pressure and his face turned a violent red. He was not surprised that she recognized the symbol sewn on the back of the shirt, after all it was a village near Konoha that they often used as a stopping point. She had probably seen other shinobi with that symbol or had simply heard of them, they were still a prestigious clan.

The redness was caused by the unwanted touch. He hated being touched and this stranger was taking too many liberties.

Realizing that the girl had started to bother him without even introducing herself, he looked at her angrily.

"I'm Uchiha Sasuke" he replied proudly. "You?"

As natural and legitimate as the question was, she seemed taken aback when he asked her. She looked at him uncertainly for a moment before peeping:

"Konan".

He arched an eyebrow at not hearing any surnames. He stared at her from head to toe, once again looking at her clothing - actually it had no clan symbol on the back - then asked seriously:

"Are you a ninja?"

The answer came as fast as it was sure.

"No, of course not."

"But you know how to use the chakra," he frowned. There was no way that those jumps could be made without good chakra control.

"Oh, that's because they taught me," he replied with a shrug.

"Who?"

"My family".

"Are they ninjas?"

This time she didn't answer right away, on the contrary she seemed to think carefully about it.

"They ... they were," she finally resolved.

Sasuke assumed that they were retired, or that for some reason they had retired. It was something that often happened, after all, the shinobi life was not for everyone, only the strongest resisted. That's why Sasuke was going to be strong.

"Well, I'm a ninja," he finally said, shrugging his shoulders with pride. He also tapped on his forehead, showing the symbol of Konoha.

Konan did not give him the admiring look he was used to receiving, rather she looked rather darkly at the symbol of the stylized leaf.

"Um ..." she hummed.

"What's up?" he muttered annoyed by the unenthusiastic reaction.

"Shinobis bring death" was the simple and grim answer. "I do not like them".

Sasuke grimaced at that answer and wanted to protest, but the girl grabbed his hand, touching him again. Really, it was more annoying than Sakura and Himawari combined! He hated females!

"But you were nice to me, so I'll make an exception. Come on! Ramen, ramen, ramen! "

The festival was splendid, all colorful, full of weird objects and delicious candy. It had been fun to play check shots, with their academy-trained aiming she and Himawari had managed to grab all the cool prizes.

Of course, it would have been a lot more fun if Sasuke-kun had stayed with them ... But even after so much time together he continued to isolate himself ...

A bit embittered by those thoughts, Sakura almost bumped into Himawari's back, risking to end up with her face immersed in the candy floss she was holding.

"Hima, what ..." she blurted out, getting angry.

The squadmate quickly grabbed her with an arm around her shoulders and made to move her away in the direction they were coming from.

"Hey, maybe we could go back to the darts stand ..." Himawari offered with a huge tight smile.

With the missions in the sun her skin had become very dark and there were many freckles on her face. Even the brown hair - the color typical of her clan - had become lighter at the tips of the braids. With that sunburned appearance she looked much more rogue, not at all aristocratic despite coming from one of the most important clans of Konoha.

She looked at her in annoyance.

"Come on, I want to go see koi fish!" she protested, freeing herself from his grip.

Luckily for her, she was thinner than Himawari and it was easy for her to slip out of her grip. She was able to turn around to walk again, but in this way she saw what her friend had tried to hide from her.

Around the corner, Sasuke was sitting on a bench next to a girl.

And they were sharing lunch.

Sakura distinctly felt her own little heart break as she froze to the scene. She couldn't believe what she was seeing, it hurt too much. Sasuke, who never let anyone approach him, was in the company of another girl.

"I'm sure it's not what it seems!" offered Himawari with a forced smile.

*Why, what does it look like?* She wanted to ask but her throat felt blocked with tears. She had to remind herself that ninjas were forbidden to cry so as not to burst into whining.

She started to walk towards the couple, but Himawari grabbed her firmly by the arm. She stared at her seriously, shaking her head.

"Sakura, you can't go there," she told her.

"Why not?"

Himawari replied with a shrug. "What would you do?"

She realized she didn't have an answer. Probably the most instinctive reaction she had was to go there and share them, but then what? What would she do?

She looked into her friend's hazel eyes for advice. She loved Himawari, because Himawari didn't like Sasuke and this allowed them to be friends, unlike with Ino. It was also nice to have a teammate, it made her feel less alone.

"It's not fair," she snapped, sniffing. "He left us in the lurch and now he is there to do the bad luck with other girls".

Himawari grinned sympathetically, deciding not to point out that Sasuke seemed uncomfortable rather than behaving like he was every time he had to deal with another human being. Instead she opted for another way.

"Sakura, you love Sasuke so much, right?"

The little girl looked at her as if it were obvious.

"Well yes!"

"And just because you love him you want him to be happy, right?"

She nodded, this time perplexed.

"So if Sasuke is happy, is it okay if he is with other people besides us?" she asked deliberately avoiding talking about girls.

This time Sakura was less convinced. She looked at her softly.

"Why can't he be happy with us?" she asked.

Himawari shrugged, because Sasuke was a weird guy who really struggled to understand. He was too quiet, he was always on his own and never got too off balance. He was too serious a child, in her opinion. It was okay to have ambitions, she too dreamed of becoming a medical ninja who could match the legendary Tsunade, but Sasuke was too invested in being a ninja. At times he seemed to forget that he was only twelve years old, taken as he was by becoming stronger and stronger.

Therefore, to Sakura's question he answered with a diplomat: "You know how he is".

She didn't look very convinced, but with a last yank Himawari managed to drag her away.

"So let's go humiliate a few more civilians?" she proposed in an attempt to cheer her up.

But Sakura only replied with a grimace, still hurt by what she had seen.

## Chapter End Notes

Remember the tags, there is no "Uzumaki Naruto female" warning, so this must be a henge to not be recognized: D

Also be good to Sakura, she is still a child in her first crush and she has to grow up. Her character growth will develop more slowly in the story, but it will be very important!

I hope you enjoyed this first chapter! Thanks for commenting: D



# The lost child

## Chapter Summary

"Why ... why do you say it's better?" he asked so confused that he forgot he was offended.

Konan gave him an obvious look.

"You do not know? To develop sharingan you have to be in severe emotional pain," she said practically, as if it were a topic she was used to discussing.

## Chapter Notes

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

Konan had gone all out on ramen at an astonishing speed. But Sasuke hadn't protested, you could see a mile away that the girl must have been really hungry and therefore had just taken two bites of noodle. Not that he minded, that ramen tasted really bad.

He just stared at the girl gorging herself, a little uncomfortable due to the silence broken only by the noises Konan made with her mouth as she tried to put more noodles in her mouth.

He wasn't sure why he stayed there. Of course, at first it was out of a sense of guilt and sorrow for the girl, but now he was also curious. There was something about her that struck him, perhaps her vivid eyes that reminded him of something, even if he didn't quite know what. It was as if they teased his memories, as if he had seen her before, but he was sure he had never met any other girl with such blue eyes.

"So, Mr. Ninja, what are you doing here?" Konan asked distracting him from contemplation.

"I'm on a mission," he replied seriously.

"Really? Was that why you were bored on the roof? "

"I wasn't bored on the roof!" He protested. "However, in reality the mission is already over. We just had to escort a guy," he grumbled.

Konan gave that strange fox smile of her, which Sasuke found to find really irritating. He had come to the conclusion that her face was the perfect definition of a slap face. It was strange that in such a short time he already found her like this... argh. Only one other child had managed to annoy him at that speed, but ... that child was no longer there.

He frowned a little sadly at that thought, especially because he realized that probably Konan's blue eyes were reminding him of Naruto's. Usually he didn't think much about that former Academy friend, so many years had passed and they had only played together once, but that girl resembled him so much that it reminded him of Naruto.

"So how about a new mission, Mr. ninja?"

Sasuke snorted in annoyance.

"Can't you just call me Sasuke?"

She smiled slyly. "Nah, mister ninja is better looking. Or do you prefer *teme*? "

He frowned. "Do it and I'll call you *dobe*," he threatened.

"Okay, Mr. Sasuke the ninja," she rolled her eyes, "do you want to hear the mission I want to offer you?"

He looked at her extremely skeptical. This girl didn't even have money to get food, let alone afford a shinobi mission.

"Let's hear it," he said, however curious.

She spread her smile and, before she knew it, she was standing in front of him and pulling him by the arm, again.

"Keep me company during the festival!" exulted.

Sasuke tried to resist, annoyed by what he now understood was a mockery.

"Can't you just be with your family?" protest.

The crystalline eyes darkened for a few seconds.

"My family is not here, I came alone".

The tone intrigued him enough to forget to resist and with a rush Konan took it with him.

"What do you mean?"

"Ah, you see ..." she began in a low voice, conspiratorially. "The mission I want to give you is just about this: I am here incognito" she revealed touching her nose with a finger.

Sasuke wasn't convinced at all. "What do you mean?"

"Tobi-sensei didn't want me to come here, and even nii-san and everyone else agreed, they said it was too risky," she began seriously. "But I wanted to see the festival! And the fireworks! And all the good food there is! " screamed in his ears. "So I came here secretly, without letting anyone know," she concluded proudly.

Sasuke stared at her, a little taken aback by such a story. Too risky? He wondered how this girl's alleged parents could consider a stupid festival dangerous. True, there were no shinobi patrols, but there were regular village guards to keep thieves and riots away. Not to mention that the proximity to Konoha guaranteed more than enough protection.

Unless they are nukenin ... In that case the proximity to Konoha would have been a problem.

Sasuke thought he was pretty good at recognizing bad people, Konan didn't seem like one of them. She wasn't a nukenin, she was just... annoying.

“So,” she resumed gesturing in her monologue, “your mission will be to escort me and protect me during the festival. So I will return home safe and sound and Tobi-sensei will be calm to know that it was an Uchiha who protected me ”.

Despite himself, Sasuke felt a pang of pride at hearing those words. He was proud to know that his clan had a good reputation among civilians outside Konoha, that even outside the village they recognized their worth. Sasuke was proud to be an Uchiha and couldn't wait to awaken the sharingan, like his brother and father.

"Umpf, since you offered me lunch I won't ask you to pay me," he offered magnanimously.

The girl's face broke into another beautiful smile and before he could escape he found himself in an iron grip. He blushed furiously.

"Let me go! Let me go! Otherwise I'll take it all back, "he threatened.

\*\*

His mother always said his problem was that he didn't give people a chance. In fact, she often scolded him for not trying to bond more with his teammates. More than once she had even tried to invite them to their house and it had been terribly embarrassing.

It's not that Sasuke didn't like people, he wasn't misanthropic like his mother joked. He was simply used to being alone, since he had no friends during his childhood. As the only child of that age in the Uchiha clan, he had failed to bond with his older cousins, who considered him a brat, or with the smaller ones who irritated him to death; while civilized children ignored him for some reason they did not understand, or children of other clans only admired him from afar. He had learned to be alone and found that he was fine with it, he could train without being bothered or slowed down.

But.

But maybe his mother was right and he had to start giving people a chance, because he was definitely having fun with Konan. He would never tell him, of course, because he wanted to keep his image as a stoic shinobi. But she was really nice, beyond her irritated character, and even the festival seemed less boring than it had initially profiled.

Konan was enthusiastic about everything, and her energetic and sunny manner was inevitably contagious. Sasuke was trying to tell himself with superiority that he was just amused by the childish way of doing things, but the truth was that that spontaneity was melting him. It wasn't like Himawari who enjoyed contradicting him for everything and making fun of him

for his seriousness, or like Sakura who sometimes puzzled too much to please him and was almost built.

In fact, he was also a little alarmed by that attitude. What life did she lead if a stupid provincial festival thrilled her so much? Compared to the Konoha events themselves, that fair was very poor and poorly managed, it really wasn't anything special. Yet before the girl's eyes it seemed to be something incredible and new.

Intrigued by this attitude, he tried to ask her a few questions about her and her family, but in one way or another she always managed to find a way to answer evasively or even untie the question. On the contrary, instead, she asked Sasuke a lot of persistent questions.

"Do you already have the sharingan?"

He blushed at that question. "I'll have it soon," he muttered.

Konan pointed the finger at him. "So you don't have it!"

Sasuke felt as if he had swallowed a lemon and with the most indignant face in his repertoire he prepared to retort, but every protest stayed on his tongue as the girl's face became incredibly serious.

"Well that's better" she said almost relieved.

He stared at that serene smile for a few seconds, as if he had given her good news, without understanding. His entire clan was pressuring him to develop sharingan, his father was worried because it was taking longer than Itachi and even Kakashi-sensei was on him in training. He expected disappointment, mockery, not relief.

"Why ... why do you say it's better?" he asked so confused that he forgot he was offended.

Konan gave him an obvious look.

"You do not know? To develop sharingan you have to be in severe emotional pain," she said practically, as if it were a topic she was used to discussing.

Sasuke gaped at her, barely refraining from asking for more clarification. Which was stupid: he was the Uchiha, it was his innate eye art, what could the stranger know?

"How ... how do you know?" he tried to ask more certain than he was.

The serious expression was immediately replaced with the saucy one and illuminated him with a new fox smile.

"Secret!"

He looked at her annoyed and tried to argue, but the girl was once again able to talk over him.

"Anyway you don't have to worry, you are a ninja, so sooner or later you will see one of your friends die and then ... zap, sharingan!"

His eyes widened in shock, his mouth still ajar in protest he had been forced to swallow.

"What are you saying..."

The blue eyes looked at him as if they were digging his soul.

"Why are you making that face? You are soldiers and in wars you die, do you know that? "

"We're not at war," he replied confused.

He received a mocking laugh.

"Not openly, that's true. But in any case, sooner or later you will find yourself facing a mission in which you will have to sacrifice a comrade to accomplish it ”.

The more she talked the more Sasuke was horrified, mostly because of the reasonable tone she was using. He knew that ninja missions were dangerous, that the higher you rank the more vital matters you had, and that was okay, that was what he wanted.

But he had never thought that winning meant sacrificing a partner.

He thought back with a shudder of Kakashi's first lesson, the challenge of the bells.

With a blow to the shoulder, the girl brought him back to himself.

"That's why I didn't want to be a ninja," she smiled lightly. "You, instead?"

"What?"

He seriously hated this girl, she made him feel stupid and Sasuke wasn't stupid, he was the best of the genin freshmen!

"Why did you become a ninja?" she repeated.

He found he could not answer unless "because yes" was enough. But he realized for himself how stupid and childish he would be. Honestly, he never asked himself whether to become one or not, it was something already decided from birth. He was the son of the Uchiha clan leader, what else was he to become? Certainly not just a civilian, even his mother was a kunoichi. Everyone he knew was, except the old people and the children.

He was sure that Konan would not like this explanation, she probably would have mocked him, so he shrugged and raised his chin, trying to give himself as much confidence as possible.

"Because I want to become Hokage”.

His heart was beating very fast. Few people knew his dream, they could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Perhaps because when he told his father at nine he was not taken seriously, but with a grunt. Of course, it is true that then he only said it out of exasperation, because no one ever paid any attention to him.

There was that period in his eight years where Itachi, Fugaku and even his mother were always in audience with the Hokage. Tired of being left alone, Sasuke had wondered if he should also become Hokage to get some consideration from his family. Growing up that dream had matured with him, but he had never abandoned it.

Konan opened her eyes wide, making a surprised expression for the first time.

"You?" she asked amazed.

Sasuke wondered if, among the many things she knew, there was also the tension between the Uchiha Clan and the Konoha Council. He wasn't blind or stupid, he knew that even civilians didn't trust his family - for a reason he really didn't know - and after all if he wanted to become Hokage it was also to show that the Uchiha cared about Konoha. Nobody expected an Uchiha Hokage, but he would become one, in the face of all.

So he straightened his back and said defiantly, "Yes, me."

Konan continued to look at him as if waiting for a joke, then shrugged and looked away, suddenly dejected.

"What's up?" he snapped piqued.

"It's just... I'm sorry. I like you, but all the Hokage die soon".

"It's not true!" protest. "Our Honorable Sandaime ..."

"Oh, but because he's a fool," Konan interrupted quietly. "He is a coward incapable of anything, who has dragged his people into two wars, has no interest in ..."

Sasuke wasn't willing to listen to anything else. Konan had passed the mark: insulting the Hokage meant insulting Konoha and it was something he could not tolerate.

Before he knew it, he had already drawn a kunai.

Himawari had never been happier than in her entire life to have succumbed to Sakura's pout and started following Sasuke and his new friend like two psychopaths. She also had to thank Sakura's quick reflexes, who intervened yelling "SASUKE-KUN!" before that idiot of their teammate stabbed a defenseless civilian.

Sakura's distinctive scream had roused him from his murderous instincts and had given the poor civilian a chance to step back.

Himawari ran after Sakura, catching up with the annoyed friend. They both fixed a friendly smile on their faces.

"Oh, what a *surprise*," she said, pretending that they had really just happened to be there and hadn't been chasing them throughout the festival. "Sasuke! Did you find a girlfriend? "

If on the one hand his question had the nefarious effect of making Sakura's sad sulk return, on the other they made Sasuke snap as if he had been stung and he too walked away from the blonde girl.

"No! No!" he protested as if he had insulted his clan. "Not this fool! How disgusting!"

"Hey!" the aforementioned fool was offended.

Sakura gave her a smile, reassured by the fact that Sasuke regarded her in the same way he considered everyone else. Better predisposed to the stranger, she took a step forward and made a slight bow.

"We are Haruno Sakura and Sarutobi Himawari, Sasuke-kun's teammates. You?"

Contradicting the impression they had had of the girl up to that moment, she took another step back, staring at Sakura with distrust and at something she could not decipher.

"Konan," she muttered in a low voice, suddenly shy.

At her behavior, Sasuke rose an eyebrow, he too must have noticed the sudden change in personality. Now she no longer seemed expansive and sociable, on the contrary she was in a stiff pose, her eyes moving nervously as if expecting imminent danger.

Sasuke thought it was because of the weapon, after all he had almost attacked her, and was ashamed of her overreaction. Even though she insulted her Hokage she was still a harmless, unarmed civilian, his duty was to protect her, not hurt her, no matter how annoying and rude she was.

He pocketed the weapon without apologizing, it was not something he could do anyway.

Sakura tried to ignore the other girl's suspicious reaction and asked:

"Are you from this village? Your festival is really nice! "

Konan drew back with his head inside the collar of his jacket like a turtle.

"No, I'm not from here," she said dryly.

Himawari noticed that the blue eyes were gazing with distrust especially at their hitai-ate, looking with spite at the symbol of the leaf. She exchanged a look with Sasuke to see if he too had noticed. That behavior was very strange.

"Oh and where are you from?" Sakura asked.

She too must have noticed the suspicious behavior, because her voice had taken on the pitch it had only when she tried to stay lively.

Konan didn't answer. To tell the truth, she looked ready to run away in a heartbeat. But she couldn't take a step anymore, because she slammed her back into someone and fell to the ground.

“Oh, how cute. You are making friends ”.

The three genin looked up, surprised by the sudden appearance of Kakashi. The sensei had been so quiet that he was totally unnoticed, like a real ninja. His face as usual was stuck in the pages of that porn novel he always had with him, he hadn't even glanced at the girl he had collided with.

Until a strangled moan of pure terror came out from her.

Kakashi stopped looking after his book, lazily shifted his gaze to the blonde figure fallen to the ground.

It all happened very quickly.

The gray and uninterested eye widened as it landed on Konan's face.

"But this ..." Kakashi hissed without realizing it, the book went very quickly into one of the pockets of the jacket.

Kakashi snapped at Konan, but the girl was able to recover from the paralysis she fell into when the adult ninja showed up. Prying up on her feet she got up to shoot, Sasuke could feel the air fill excessively with chakra, as if the girl was about to use it.

*Shinshun?* He guessed, putting himself in the attack position.

But he had just had time to position himself, that his sensei had already reached the girl. Konan lost concentration to shoot, jumped sideways to avoid the adult. It didn't work: Kakashi managed to touch her forehead with a bare finger.

"Kai!" shouted the teacher.

The next second Konan, still in the midst of the failed leap, rolled away wrapped in a cloud of white smoke.

When she became visible she was crouched on the ground again, but she was different.

She was no longer a girl.

He was a child, a child with unkempt blond hair, aggressive blue eyes and mustache-like scars on his cheeks.

Sasuke felt his heart race in his throat.

"Naruto ..." he whispered.



## Chapter End Notes

And so it ends in suspense. I'm sorry? Or maybe not! I hope you enjoyed the interaction between Naruto (transformed) and Sasuke. As you can see, there are two main differences.

Sasuke wishes to become Hokage. Initially (like Naruto in the canonverse) it's for attention, but it's a desire that grows and matures with him in the story.

Instead Naruto, raised by Obito and Nagato (who despise the shinobi system) hates ninjas and doesn't want to have anything to do with them.

Thank you for the comments, I am happy that the story has this welcome!

# Pursue him

## Chapter Notes

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

*Naruto parried his hands forward to slow the fall on his face, he rolled on the grass but could not get up, too tired to move even a single muscle.*

*"Have you already given up?" an annoying voice over his head scoffed.*

*With a growl he opened his eyes and jumped back to his feet, but the abrupt gesture made him dizzy and his vision blurred for a few seconds. He gritted his jaw, determined not to fall.*

*"Never!" he guaranteed with a glow in his blue irises.*

*Shisui only widened the smile on his resolute gaze.*

*"Oh, here, I meant."*

*Naruto was all battered, his hair more disheveled than usual, sweat soiling his body along with the dirt. His clothes seemed to have gone through hell, when more trivially he was just training with Shisui.*

*Determined to make him pay for all the times he had put his ass on the ground, Naruto began to call his chakra to focus on the muscles of his legs.*

*He didn't even have time to try the shunshin as he saw a couple of shurikens being thrown at his head. With a shrill cry he moved, losing balance and concentration on his chakra. He found himself on the ground again.*

*"You're still doing it," Shisui scolded plaintively, as if he were the one frustrated by the failures. "You don't have to take so much chakra! In addition to taking an infinite amount of time, and you see how an enemy takes advantage of it, you waste it and risk ending up annoyed by exhaustion. No Naruto, you don't have to rely on your monstrous amount of chakra! "*

*Naruto pouted, closing his mouth and biting out of protest.*

*"Not to mention that you risk waking your tenant".*

*At that prospect he shivered. At the moment it was just him and Shisui in the shelter and the sharingan of the other could not keep him at bay, if nearby Konoha broke out it would have realized their intrusion in the Land of Fire.*

*"So," Shisui resumed with a mischievous smile, "what should I do? Do I tell Kisame to take you to the ocean again? "*

*He looked at him in horror at that threat. He still remembered too well the terror he had felt when the fish man, after taking him off the coast on a tiny boat, threw him into the water with only an explanation based on how he had to walk on it.*

*"Concentrate the chakra on the soles of the feet. Learn if you don't want to drown "the asshole said.*

*"Let's try again?" Shisui urged him, offering him a hand.*

*He wore gloves with reinforced knuckles that left his fingers exposed. He did not have a black hood with red clouds, it was a really hot day in the Land of Fire and for this they both had opted for a mesh shirt and standard pants. Shisui's appearance was perfectly refreshed unlike Naruto. Her curly hair was not ruffled or frizzy with sweat, it fell on the forehead in soft shiny locks, which brought out the pale and smooth complexion, not at all reddened by fatigue. Naruto bothered to notice how big the gap in strength between them was. Even though he had been training since being rescued by Konoha, he couldn't catch up with any of his teammates.*

*It was frustrating.*

*He accepted the hand with an annoyed look and let it help him to his feet. The spring breeze caressed his vault, partly wiping away the sweat. He paused for a moment, his eyes on one side of the clearing. From beyond the woods came the echoes of warm sensations and chakras from happy civilians. They weren't that far from a village, but the fact that it didn't even have ninjas on guard still made it a safe haven.*

*"Tomorrow is the festival" he murmured. "We can go?"*

*"You heard Obito, he said no."*

*"Please ... nothing will happen!" Naruto tried to convince him.*

*"That's not it." He crossed his arms across his chest. "But if I lose sight of you, first Tobi will start hitting me and mourning me, then Madara will tear me apart and finally Obito will allow Hidan to sacrifice me to Jashin. No thanks".*

*"If he doesn't find out ..."*

*"He will find out".*

*Naruto pouted, his arms crossed over his chest and his head nestled between his shoulders. He was lovely, but by now Shisui had the callus to resist his pleading eyes.*

*"We cannot leave the safe perimeter of the shelter," he reminded him a little bitterly. "If we leave it, they will notice our presence and come to capture us. You don't want to go back to Konoha, do you? "*

*The pout disappeared in favor of a frozen expression.*

*"No, never, dattebayo!" he guaranteed.*

*He nodded. "For this we have to stay good here. And then tomorrow evening we have to remove the curtains, we don't have time ".*

*Despite having spoken with a resolute tone, Shisui still felt a little guilty in front of the child's disconsolate expression. He was only twelve years old and forced into the life of a nukenin. Despite the marked improvement over Konoha, his only friends were all dangerous S-class shinobi, he had no one his age to do simple kid things with. The youngest were him, Shisui, and Deidara, but Deidara enjoyed making people explode, it was not a healthy pastime for a growing child. Already because of Kakuzo he was becoming a bit too attached to money, it was better that he didn't end up influenced by people like Hidan or Deidara.*

*Shisui patted him on the back of the head.*

*"Come on, let's resume. You will see that by sunset you will be able to master the shunshin ".*

*"Obviously, dattebayo!"*

**\*\***

"Dattebayo!"

Sasuke couldn't take his eyes off the ragged child who had fallen to the ground, his gaze was wide open in catching every detail of that face that he had resigned himself to never seeing again.

But there he is, in front of him, grown up, *alive*. And he still used that stupid and annoying exclamation, how could he not recognize him immediately?

He felt at his side Sakura heave a sigh of pure surprise, as incredulous as he was. She too had dealt with Naruto before he disappeared, she must have recognized him too. Only Himawari didn't seem particularly impressed, but they hadn't been in class together at the Academy so it wasn't all that strange. She was just surprised by the discovery of the henge.

None of the three genin knew what to do, so they remained in position awaiting the sensei's instructions. After all, for them it was like being in front of a dead man, they were not prepared for this and neither was Kakashi, honestly. He could have expected everything from that trifle of mission, except the appearance of his sensei's son, who he believed had been dead for four years now.

"Naruto ..." he said softly, a conciliatory tone.

He took a cautious step forward, as slow as if he were approaching a wild animal, and that was exactly how the lost child reacted.

A hoarse breath came from his lips, similar to the threatening warning of a cat, and he crawled backwards on the floor. Kakashi had noticed that he had started calling the chakra

around him again, but he had also realized that he was slow to do so. He had time to try to tame it.

"Naruto" tried again ignoring the warning. He raised a hand to his genin, ordering them to stay still. "Do you know who we are?"

He didn't have many illusions. It was more likely that he recognized Sakura and Sasuke, since they were in the same class at the academy; he had always been just a shadow in his life, an ANBU guard with orders never to get near him.

But he could still recognize the Konoha symbol.

That was exactly what Naruto looked at, looking up at the forehead. But he did not look at him with recognition, there was a sudden anger that ignited all his expression and his posture, from simply scared and defensive, also became aggressive.

"*Rubbish*," he replied with contempt.

Then he disappeared in a snap, his shunshin finished. But Kakashi managed to stay on top of him and at the same moment he too disappeared, chasing him.

Sasuke looked at the empty clearing with the feeling that time was starting to flow again only at that moment.

"What are we going to do?" Sakura broke the silence first, full of nervousness.

"W-are we waiting here?" Himawari offered in a questioning tone, she was still very confused by what had happened. "Sensei can handle it alone without us in the way."

Sasuke didn't agree with that choice at all.

"I follow them," he declared.

He wasn't a sensor, he couldn't sense the direction they were headed, but he could try to guess it. After all, he was not called a genius by chance.

If Naruto wanted to hide he had to get out of the village before his presence was reported; the entire village was surrounded by rice fields, except for the west side where the great forest of the Land of Fire almost reached the gates of the village, there it would have been easier for him to blend in than in the open field.

"Sasuke did you see sensei, he made a sign of not ..."

He didn't even let Himawari finish, he jumped to the first roof within reach and from there he headed towards the green trees he saw. He sensed behind him Sakura reach him and smiled, obviously Sakura would always follow him, it was the only good thing about that crush he had on him; shortly thereafter he also heard Himawari's leaps.

They reached the forest, slowing the pace of the jumps because of the branches that gave an irregular path.

"Here they are!" Sakura called.

Sasuke followed the direction he pointed down and saw them too. They were both in the undergrowth, Kakashi had blocked Naruto and was now trying to keep him good, but he was kicking and wriggling like a madman to escape.

"Leave me! Leave me!"

"Calm down, Naruto, I won't hurt you ..."

"No, leave me. I hate you, let me go".

"I have to take you back to Konoha, home ..."

"It's not my home!" he roared eagerly. "Leave me, friend-killers!"

Naruto punched Kakashi's stomach with his foot, but Sasuke could swear he wasn't that strong, it was probably the way he called him that destabilized Kakashi enough for the kid to slip out of his grasp. But he didn't go far, because the three genin landed from the branches blocking his escape route.

For a moment Sasuke felt guilty at the betrayal look Naruto gave him, but he remembered that he was the one who had been fooled with a henge. He was the one who must have felt betrayed, not the other way around.

Naruto tried to get around them, but by now Kakashi was up and was on top of him again. He stopped Naruto by taking his arms behind his back, resisting the kid's kicking and screaming.

"We are not your enemies, Naruto," he said wearily from trying to hold him back without hurting him. "I don't know what Shisui told you, but ..."

"If you don't let me go I'll let the fox out!" Naruto interrupted him with all the breath he had in his lungs, his eyes small with terror.

Sasuke didn't understand what he meant by that threat, but it must be something dangerous because Kakashi tensed and became more cautious.

"You won't," he said firmly.

"Challenge me, dattebayo!"

But even if Kakashi wanted to do it, he didn't have time. Sasuke saw too late the group of sharp shurikens that were thrown at the head of his sensei, who luckily had more speed of reflexes and was able to avoid. To do so, however, he let go of Naruto, who took the opportunity to roll away.

They immediately raised their heads in the direction from which the shurikens had come, a young man crouched in balance on a branch. For the second time in a matter of minutes, Sasuke found himself with his mouth ajar and his eyes wide with surprise.

"What a nice hangout," Shisui commented, an ironic smile. "Hi, senpai. Hello little cousin".

## Chapter End Notes

And again ... it closes in suspense! I'm terrible, I know :D But now the cavalry has arrived for Naruto and in the next chapter there will be a mini fight between Kakashi and Shisui, I hope you like it!

I hope you enjoy this chapter too! I decided to make them short, so that I can publish more frequently ^^ Tell me if this decision suits you!

Anyway I hope to be able to make you love Shisui and Naruto, for me they are becoming a real brotp ... it's a pity that there are no fan art T\_T

Thank you so much for the comments on the last chapter! It makes me really happy to read them and they make me want to keep going! it's nice to see people appreciating your wacky ideas :D

# You took him away from me again

## Chapter Summary

"I'm your friend," he whispered as he finally managed to lock his hands behind his back. For a moment, Naruto stopped fighting him and just looked at him. But not with recognition, but as a suspicious and wounded animal.

"Liar," he growled.

## Chapter Notes

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

*The parchment was very bulky, the dimensions were really considerable even for being roll. But then there were many forbidden techniques of Konoha in there, he certainly could not expect a roll of a few centimeters. Scanning the sharingan confirmed to Shisui that it was the authentic one and not a copy.*

*"Perfect," he considered and pulled out a much smaller scroll, a simple sealing parchment, where he sealed the Forbidden Scroll inside for easier transport. He then looked up at Mizuki.*

*If he remembered correctly, they had been together at the Academy, albeit in different classes. In his memories he was a grudge kid towards Konoha and Sandaime, so when he had to think of someone infiltrating he was the first that came to mind. Fortunately, as an adult Mizuki had been very willing to betray Konoha for a lot of money.*

*He then took the bag with the aforementioned pile of money, the same one that Kakazu had given him almost crying at the idea of all that money disappearing from the Akatsuki coffers.*

*"That's all, as agreed," he said.*

*Mizuki opened it to make sure and smiled slimy at the sight of the banknotes.*

*"Are you sure nobody caught you?" Shisui nervously insisted.*

*They had managed to remain invisible to Konoha's radar for four years, he had no intention of interrupting this happy streak.*

*"Absolutely sure" Mizuki guaranteed. "When they notice it will be too late."*

*Shisui hoped it was so, but in any case even if Mizuki was captured he had imposed a genjutsu on him when they first met. Not even the Konoha ninja knew who really gave the commission, the genjutsu made him believe that Shisui was an Iwa shinobi.*



*With a quick nod of the head he greeted him then, determined not to stay longer than necessary in the borders of the Land of Fire. He teleported to their lair as quickly as possible and hoped that Naruto was already ready to go.*

*"Naruto? I'm back, are you ready? " Shisui called not seeing him in the main room, the same one they had also used for sleeping.*

*He got no response and this began to worry him, but he decided it was too early to draw hasty conclusions, Naruto could have dozed off anywhere else. He then made a quick tour of the entire den, which brought him back to the initial room without having found anything.*

*Fuck.*

*Naruto wasn't there. Obito would have killed him.*

**\*\***

On a scale of one and ten, the situation was very dangerous.

Shisui first glanced at the brat, the same one who had had the ardor to escape from under his nose to go to the festival that was clearly forbidden to him. At least he seemed to be fine, he saw no wounds, he was just dirty with dirt and leaves. He then turned back to Kakashi and cursed his terrible luck. He wasn't worried about the three genin, even though Sasuke was among them, they were still children, but Kakashi was dangerous. He did not know if he was able to stand up to him, perhaps in a fight of attrition since he certainly had more chakra than Hatake, but he did not know if he could last that long. He was already struggling with the prolonged use of his Mangekyo in the last few days, he didn't know how much he could rely on the sharingan. Surely Kakashi knew his techniques and knew about Amatsukami, in fact he never looked him in the eye as soon as he recognized him.

*I don't have to fight him, he told himself, I just have to take Naruto and run away, I can still do that.*

No one matched him in speed, certainly none of those present. With a continuous use of the shunshin they would have moved far enough to lose their tracks, to be able to reach the refuge in the Land of Grass.

It was still a nuisance. They had managed to stay off Konoha's radar for four years, reappearing would only remind them that there was a nukenin Uchiha to catch as soon as possible. Not to mention that they now knew their precious Junchūriki was still alive and would do anything to get him back.

"Shisui, what a pleasure to see you again," Kakashi said, responding to his initial greeting.

He too was observing the change in situation and pondering its possible drawbacks and advantages. He certainly did not expect the intervention of a criminal of Shisui's caliber. He

was especially looking at his black cape with red clouds.

"The pleasure is yours alone," the nukenin assured with a hateful smile.

He quickly teleported in front of Naruto, a short sword drawn. Even if he was in a more easily attacked position there, at least he could defend the child and prevent him from taking him hostage.

"Now, if you don't mind, we have to go," he said keeping the fake cordial tone.

"Actually, I do," said Kakashi putting in attack position, pulled itself out of the Kunai.

Sasuke tried to compose himself from amazement to prepare himself for action, determined to be useful. But as soon as he pulled out his weapons, Kakashi barked:

"You three stay out."

"Yes, that's right, leave it to the adults," Shisui followed, who certainly didn't want to hurt his cousin. "Go play somewhere".

Sasuke blushed suddenly for that offense, he hated being belittled and he was no longer a child! He was a ninja, he was trained to fight and he was there for that, how could they afford?

Kakashi was the first to sprint, threw one of the kunai in the face of Shisui, who was able to easily deflect the trajectory with the blade of his tantō. The action distracted him enough not to allow him to react in time to Kakashi's direct attack, and the man was found to meet him with another kunai. Although he also had to think about defending Naruto, he also managed to deflect the second Kunai's throw and parried Kakashi's punch. Before he could counterattack, Shisui quickly danced into a fencing figure and sliced through Kakashi's chest with the blade.

Sasuke's eyes widened and Sakura let out a scream of fear, while Himawari gasped.

But no blood came out of the wound. Kakashi's body itself disappeared in a cloud of smoke and a tree stump appeared in its place.

Shisui smiled in exasperation. "Kawarimi," he guessed.

He looked around, the sharingan active for the slightest movement and anticipation. Nothing came from right, left, back and forth. He glanced up into the trees, but even there there was no sign of Kakashi. It was a second late that he remembered to look down, but as soon as he did the earth cracked and a hand emerged that blocked him, preventing him from jumping.

"Shit" he cursed and not finding a better solution he thought of directing his tantō towards the earth.

It was an imprecise move, Kakashi managed to stabilize him before he totally emerged from the earth and the blade never reached his head. Konoha's Jōnin threw him far away, causing him to lose his balance.

Now he was in front of Naruto, looming over him with the sharingan visible.

"Naruto, come with me," he said hastily, ignoring the way the boy was shaking with fear.

He tried to grab him, but with peripheral vision Kakashi saw Shisui throw a series of small fireballs at him. To avoid them he had to jump far, clearing the way to Naruto and Shisui was in a flash, as fast as they were told, to protect him with his body.

"Try to touch him again" he began slowly, "and I'll tear off that eye you stole". He smiled. "Who knows, maybe it might suit me better."

Sasuke had to intervene. No matter what the sensei had said and the grievances of his teammates, Kakashi needed their help. It was obvious that he couldn't fight Shisui and take Naruto, he had to focus on one thing while the others did the rest.

He looked at Sakura and Himawari. The two of them seemed too stuck and scared to act, he should have thought of it.

Patiently he waited for the moment, muscles tense and nervous with the tension of the moment. He just had to wait for the right moment, one in which Kakashi would have captured all of Shisui's attention, perhaps managing to carry him far enough. It was enough for him to leave Naruto unattended for only three seconds.

In the meantime he began to approach slowly, sliding behind them. As soon as he took Naruto he would have to run away and seeing how he had behaved with Kakashi, their target didn't seem willing to cooperate, he had to block him in some way. Sasuke pulled out his ninja thread to at least tie Naruto's hands.

His time finally came. To avoid an earth jutsu, Shisui had to sprint high on a branch, but at the same time Kakashi had to imitate him due to a Uchiha fireball. Now Naruto was the only one on the ground, he had the green light.

Kakashi hadn't taught them shunshin yet, but Sasuke was quick. He arrived on Naruto before both Shisui and Kakashi could realize it. The blond boy didn't manage to react in time, Sasuke knocked him down thanks to his taijutsu and immediately tried to tie him.

"Let me go, what are you doing ?!" Naruto yelled.

He had inevitably caught Shisui's attention, Kakashi was keeping him busy but he had to move. His knot record was best in class, but it got a bit harder if whoever you were tying was squirming all the time.

The betrayed look in the blue eyes hurt.

"We have to take you home to Konoha ..."

"Konoha is not my home!" he repeated with a ferocity that made Sasuke jump. "Nobody has ever wanted me, none of you ..."

"There are your friends".

The scream with which he replied was even more furious. "I've never had friends!"

He wanted to argue, but Naruto was right; no child in their class had ever come close to him, ever. They only pointed to him to laugh at him, steal his notebooks and blame him for anything.

"I'm your friend," he whispered as he finally managed to lock his hands behind his back.

For a moment, Naruto stopped fighting him and just looked at him. But not with recognition, but as a suspicious and wounded animal.

"*Liar*," he growled.

Sasuke couldn't argue, feeling he was terribly right. It had been his greatest regret, discovering that the child who had so intrigued him had disappeared, especially shortly after what he had done to him ... he tried not to think about it, carrying it on his shoulders. He had obviously started squirming again so he tried to exchange a look with Sakura and Himawari for help. They had to get away from there before Shisui could get past Kakashi.

He caught up with his companions and with them started running in the undergrowth, trusting that the two of them would watch his back as he was stuck holding Naruto.

They only managed a few steps. Sasuke didn't even see him coming, Sakura tried to intrude, but none of them three had the necessary preparation to face Uchiha Shisui.

Sasuke didn't even understand what happened.

He only knew that Himawari and Sakura were under Kakashi's arms, who rushed to save them from another fireball that had set fire to a tree. Instead he found himself stunned on the ground, no longer trapped Naruto, with a pang of incredible pain in his head and he had blood covering one eye, he was bleeding profusely.

Shisui perched on a branch above, freeing Naruto from the wire Sasuke had trapped him in. He immediately returned to the situation, but Kakashi no longer seemed ready to intervene, at that moment he seemed more interested in protecting Sakura and Himawari and looked at Sasuke as if he wanted to reach him too.

Sasuke stood shakily to his feet, feeling a nasty, nauseous feeling in the pit of his stomach. He wiped the blood from his face and met Shisui's gaze, for a second he thought the same looking with remorse.

"I would say we can also say goodbye," Shisui said.

Kakashi did not seem to agree, but remained on the ground staring at him in frustration.

"Why?" he snapped. "You were one of the most loyal, why are you betraying Konoha?"

A strange shadow passed in the ruby eye of his cousin, his expression became thoughtful and full of resentment. He looked ready to go, but then changed his mind.

"Sasuke" he called and Sasuke gasped in spite of himself. "You should ask your father if *he still has that ambition*." He turned to Kakashi. "And you ... ask that stupid old Hokage if *he'll use that last solution*".

There was contempt and anger in his tone, as if he were venting a millennial grudge, but Sasuke did not understand what he meant, those words only left him confused. He could not say anything and even Kakashi remained silent, frowning at those words that seemed to hide dangerous secrets. They watched him climb Naruto onto his back, but just when he was ready to go he froze. Giving them his back, he said one last thing.

"While you're at it, Sasuke, ask Itachi if he knows the place where the tortoise passed the hare at midday."

He tried to protest that that sentence didn't make any sense, but Shisui was already gone.

Naruto with him.

For a second there was a suspended silence and Sasuke was amazed when it was Kakashi who interrupted it. Since they were a team he hadn't shown a single emotion, he had remained a lazy and ironic bastard all along. But at that moment a cry of frustration left his mouth, so loud that it seemed to echo throughout the forest. Sasuke winced when he saw him throw a kunai at the branch from which Shisui had disappeared.

"Again!" he shouted. "You took him away from me *again*".

Those words rang in his head painfully and soon that *liar* that Naruto had blown so vehemently joined. He was right, Naruto could have been his friend at the time if only he hadn't ... if only that time he wasn't so stupid. Maybe he wouldn't go away.

A grunt escaped his lips before Sasuke realized it and instinctively put a hand to his eye. The pain in his head had increased, it was a terrible throbbing just behind his eyes.

"Sasuke-kun!" he heard Sakura calling him.

Then his knees gave out and he found himself unconscious on the ground.

I hope the action scene wasn't too confusing >.<" It's always difficult to manage so many characters doing so many different things, but they're also something I love T\_T In fact, right in the wake of the canon manga, there will be a lot of action :D Many themes will continue to be proposed again, albeit in different ways.

For example, in the canonical manga Naruto has a regret, of not having put aside his pride as a child to get closer to Sasuke. Likewise, Sasuke now has the regret of not being able to befriend Naruto. Who knows, maybe that way things would have been different

...

But let's not digress! Did you like it? Of course I know that many things are unanswered, but in the next chapters they will come out. Like why the Uchiha managed to avoid the massacre or the episode referring to Sasuke ...

# Memories

## Chapter Summary

Konan watched them carefully weighing their condition, his golden eyes glittering with relief and concern. The Akatsuki hood completely hid his body.

"You're late," she said. "What happened?"

## Chapter Notes

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

*Naruto settled better on the precariously balanced branch as he leaned over to look down. In the training area there was a child with very dark hair and he was training with shuriken. He always hit the mark and Naruto felt tremendously jealous at that show of prowess.*

*The child with the hair so black that it looked like he had spilled ink on him was his classmate, he was the best of all and seemed to already know everything the teachers taught. Everyone praised and admired him, he always won taijutsu challenges and took the maximum in every test. He never showed up but Naruto knew his name was Uchiha Sasuke, actually everyone seemed to know who he was without having to ask him his name.*

*He touched his own shuriken bag with his fingers. They were all old, dull and with blunt tips that often didn't even stick to targets. Sasuke's instead shone from how new they were and cut everything with sharp edges.*

*He sighed to himself. He knew he couldn't compare his makeshift equipment to that of others, but now he was ashamed to go down to train. Who knows what he would have said ... Sasuke was really cool, while he was the deadlast in the class.*

But I will be the future Hokage!

*With this awareness, Naruto strengthened himself and descended from the tree, reaching the training ground. Sasuke stopped as soon as he realized he was no longer alone and turned to look at who the newcomer was with a surprised expression.*

*After all, that training ground almost never used anyone. That was why Naruto went there, that way there was never anyone to witness his failures.*

*With his head held high, Naruto tried his best to ignore the black eyes that had focused on him. He pulled out his battered shuriken, took a handful and began throwing them at the target in front of him. Obviously many missed the target entirely, while those who hit it did not stick and just bounced to the ground.*

*He felt a pang of disappointment, not that he really expected things to turn out differently, but he would have liked to make a good impression in front of Sasuke. He forced himself to keep his gaze fixed in front of him so as not to peek at the derisive face that the other child must have made at his demonstration of incapacity. The masters and all the others were already there to remind him that he was a failure, he didn't want to see the same look.*

*"You have a bad wrist".*

*Naruto gasped when he heard Sasuke speak. Unintentionally he stepped back and looked at him wary, even though Sasuke seemed calm.*

*"What do you want?" he blurted out defensively.*

*People didn't talk to him and when they did it was always to treat him badly.*

*Sasuke narrowed his eyes in annoyance at the abrupt tone.*

*"To throw, put your wrist in this corner like this," he showed it to him, "that's why you're wrong. If you keep it that way, you have more control. So, you see? " repeated the gesture.*

*Naruto could see him well, but he didn't let go of his suspicious gaze. Sasuke thought he was as stupid as everyone believed him, so he was helping him.*

*Naruto blew hard, staring at him angrily.*

*"I don't need your help, dattebayo!" he shouted.*

*He turned his back violently, returning to the line of fire. But this time Naruto paid attention to the angle of his wrist, forcing himself to hold it as the Uchiha's child had just shown him. Despite the slight improvement, the result was almost the same.*

*He felt disappointed, but he shrugged and looked at Sasuke with disdain.*

*"You see? Your advice is useless, you can keep it to yourself".*

*Sasuke didn't even seem to notice his tone, he had a thoughtful expression as he stared closely at his shurikens.*

*"Use mine".*

*Naruto almost jumped to see Sasuke approaching with his brand new shurikens in hand.*

*"What?"*

*"Try to throw mine," he repeated, rolling his eyes, annoyed at having to repeat himself.*

*Naruto stared at him trying to figure out what kind of joke it was, or was he waiting for him to pick them up to start screaming that he had stolen them? He didn't know whether to trust.*



*Sasuke, however, must have had little patience, because in front of the hesitation in the blond child he put them in his hand without much ceremony.*

*"Now try," he ordered.*

*Naruto didn't like that domineering tone, but since he didn't scream or anything else happened, he decided to please him. He was also curious to feel the sensation of holding new, undamaged weapons. Naruto's eyes widened in amazement as the shurikens hit. Sure, they were still a long way from the bull's-eye, but they hadn't fallen to the ground!*

*A cry of victory broke from his lips parted in a huge smile, he clenched his fist with satisfaction and turned to look at Sasuke.*

*"I did it, dattebayo!"*

*Sasuke crossed his arms over his chest, the serious expression of an adult on his face that looked ridiculous with his childlike appearance.*

*"As I imagined, the problem is your shurikens. They are too old and worn out, they cannot penetrate the wood and their center of gravity has shifted. You have to buy new ones, these are useless."*

*Naruto's eyes burned at that finding. He already knew for himself that he did not have good weapons, just as he did not have good clothes and good shoes. He didn't need anyone else to remind him! That set of shuriken had been given to him by Sandaime when he started the Academy, along with some kunai and basic equipment - all second or third hand. Jiji had told him that they were the only things he could give him and therefore not to lose or break them. They were all he could have and it humiliated him that that child with the new clothes, always clean and never torn, would point out how useless they were.*

*"I'm not buying any more," Naruto said, forcing himself not to show any emotion.*

*Sasuke stared at him like he was stupid.*

*"You did not hear? I said that..."*

*"Yes, I heard," he interrupted angrily. "But I can't buy more because they cost too much!" he raised his voice at last.*

*There was a little silence and Naruto blushed violently. Now Sasuke stared at him more closely, eyes lingering over his worn clothes and many sizes smaller. Naruto bit his tongue so as not to shout at him and cursed himself internally for confirming his status as a poor fellow in front of the other.*

*He started to leave and run away, but Sasuke stopped him.*

*"Okay, then I'll leave you mine."*

*Naruto's eyes widened in surprise at that gesture. The Uchiha had no expression on his face, it was difficult to understand what was going through his mind.*

*"But so you are left without!"*

*He shrugged. "I'll tell Mom I lost them and she'll buy me another set, don't worry."*

*Naruto felt lost at that careless tone and looked at the shurikens he was offering him. Even if Naruto didn't understand it, he could tell they had excellent craftsmanship and Sasuke was giving them up without a second thought. But then he would buy more, he didn't have to worry about counting the money monthly. Entering the Academy Naruto had discovered that it is not children who worry about money, it is a duty that awaits parents. But he didn't have parents, it was a job he had to take care of himself. He had no mom who would buy him something just because he asked for it.*

*He clenched his fists. Naruto didn't want to show himself weak, so needy and above all he didn't want to feel diminished compared to Sasuke.*

*He didn't take the shurikens, put his hands in his pockets in an indifferent pose. He ignored the strange disappointed look on her black eyes and turned her back to leave.*

*"You don't need to give them to me, we can use them together while we train. See you tomorrow".*

*His heart was beating so hard that he seemed to want to come out of his ribs, rumbling in his ears like a din. Naruto had never had a friend with whom to date and he didn't know if Sasuke would respect him. He didn't know if he could begin to consider Sasuke as such.*

*But the next day Sasuke came, and the next and the next. They trained together, initially exchanging only a few words until they chatted at each break, exchanging conversations that went beyond training.*

*Then one day Sasuke stopped coming and Naruto never knew why.*

*\*\**

Shisui touched Naruto lightly, but stopped to see the blue eyes open.

"I thought you were sleeping, you were very quiet," he said.

Naruto shrugged without answering, just trying to push the memories away. He had always tried his best not to think about Konoha, but seeing those familiar faces brought back everything he had kept inside him.

"We're almost there," Shisui warned him.

His tone of voice was tired, his face beaded with sweat and the cornea of his eye reddened. Naruto could feel how exhausted Shisui was and how close to chakra deprivation. After all, Shisui had been running for hours using the shunshin to move, holding it on his back. They had not rested for a single second and it was now night, the moon had risen in the sky for many hours.

Naruto saw the rock face approaching faster and faster towards them, but he didn't blink. They crossed the illusion without slowing down and landed on a rocky clearing in front of a cave. They were located in the country of the Grass, on the border with the Land of the Earth, which is why the area was so mountainous.

Naruto slid off Shisui's back feeling all stiff, his joints aching after being locked in the same rigid position all the way. Shisui instead collapsed right on his knees, exhausted and panting.

"Arrived" he only managed to gasp before a figure emerged from the tunnel.

That bob of blue hair would have been recognizable anywhere, even in the night. Konan watched them carefully weighing their condition, his golden eyes glittering with relief and concern. The Akatsuki hood completely hid his body.

"You're late," she said. "What happened?"

Shisui took a deep breath, his hand pressed to his spleen to ease the painful sensation of cramps. He did not know how to answer, explaining why they had arrived so late compared to the agreed time implied too much.

"Konoha's shinobi held us back," he admitted.

Konan stiffened, his expression becoming more tense.

"We sowed them again in the Land of Fire," Shisui assured her.

But it was barely enough, the woman continued to stare at them with apprehension, clearly waiting for more information. Shisui felt reluctant to leave them, he didn't want to admit that Naruto had escaped his control and that one of the ninja who had caught them was Hatake *fucking* Kakashi.

Obito would have gone mad.

"It's my fault".

Shisui gasped and looked up at Naruto. The boy had clenched his fists and kept his face turned to the ground, from there he could see the embittered expression.

"In the village near the shelter they were having a festival, I wanted to go and see it even though I knew I couldn't. I used a henge to not be recognized," he explained. He glanced at Konan's expression before resuming. "I met... a child who was in class with me... he didn't recognize me, but I stayed with him and I lost track of time. He was ... ", his voice trembled a little, " Sasuke. Uchiha Sasuke, and now he's a genin. His reference sensei is Hatake Kakashi "

As soon as he said that name Konan tensed, guessing where he was going.

"Hatake Kakashi saw beyond the henge and exposed me. I tried to escape but he was about to catch me but then Shisui came and took me away "he concluded in one breath. "I'm sorry," he piped.

Konan looked back to Shisui for confirmation. He nodded.

"That's how it went".

"Are you injured?"

"Just a few scratches. Naruto is fine, I didn't let them touch him. I ... am on the verge of a chakra exhaustion ".

Sigh. "I hope you can still walk".

She motioned for them both to follow her into the cave. Shisui struggled to get up and went into the dark tunnel, only after a few steps a series of torches on the walls lit up automatically, illuminating the environment. The further they went, the more secondary roads opened and the stone corridor wound into the earth, but Konan continued confidently ahead of them. The sound of their footsteps on the stone echoed in the silence.

In front of the umpteenth intersection, Konan stopped.

"Go get some rest, Shisui. I'll tell Madara what happened ".

Shisui grimaced at hearing Obito called that way and Naruto bit his lip too, it was never a good sign when it was Madara's personality that was the most prominent.

"Okay," the Uchiha said with a sigh.

He left a caress on the boy's tousled hair before crawling to his room and throwing himself on the bed to play dead.

Naruto still followed Konan until she took him to the end of the tunnel, which opened into a huge room carved out of stone, with a very high ceiling. The corridor continued in a raised platform several meters above the floor, at the end of which a man in dark clothes was seated. Next to him there was an orange mask, a sign that he was not wearing it.

"They are back," Konan said, although it was useless since their chakra was sensed as soon as they set foot in the shelter.

Naruto walked up to Obito's side. He looked at his profile trying to guess his mood. It was on the scarred side, the red eye was turned towards the empty space of that gigantic room.

"Why this delay?" he asked dryly, the annoyance perceptible in the tone.

Naruto hesitated. It was one thing to say what had happened to Konan, who was always so calm and reassuring, another to Obito. Naruto was afraid of how he might react and let him

down.

"They met Hatake Kakashi," the woman replied just as dry and brutal, without bothering to sweeten the pill with some preliminary reassurance.

Obito's reaction was immediate. Suddenly he held his breath and his eye flew open, he immediately grabbed Naruto carrying him in his lap. His hands ran all over his body, so his gaze was scrupulous, looking for any wound.

"What did he do to you ?!" Obito growled softly.

He complained about the abrupt gestures, the sense of guilt made his ears blush in realizing how much that single sentence had made him worry.

But it was nice that he cared. Before Obito, no one had ever worried.

"Nothing," he hissed softly.

Obito had to believe him when he realized that he had no wounds. Even the small cuts he had made on his palms as he fell had already healed. However, he did not let go of him, holding him still.

"What happened?" he asked with anger vibrating in his tone.

It was Konan who answered, repeating what Naruto had told her earlier. Obito listened silently without asking questions, his jaw hardening as he realized that Naruto had voluntarily escaped from Shisui's surveillance, disobeying his orders.

Naruto knew he was in trouble as the hold on him grew to painful.

"You know you can't be seen around."

Obito's words were flat, his tone cold as the sharpest ice. It made him tingle with guilt.

"I thought they didn't recognize me ..."

"In any case, you should have run away as soon as you saw that there were Konoha shinobi," he said.

Naruto lowered his eyes. He couldn't tell Obito that if he didn't, it was because Sasuke was there, the only child who had tried to be his friend. Even if it wasn't quite correct, in the end Sasuke had proved as horrible to him as everyone else. But in that moment... he couldn't help himself, he was too curious to know what it would be like if they actually became friends.

"I'm sorry," he murmured.

Naruto expected a pat on his hair, Obito's softened tone assuring him that he would fix it. But none of this happened. On the contrary, the Uchiha let him go and got up.

"What you did is serious, Naruto," Obito remarked. "You put yourself, Shisui and all of us in danger. You know what would have happened if they had caught you".

His face burned with shame. "I know".

"I know you suffer from this, Naruto. But at least when you are in the Land of Fire, don't leave us. You are not yet strong enough to protect yourself".

Naruto shrugged that last argument and curled up into himself. Because in the end it was there that he was always going to end, that he contained everything: he was not strong. He was still just a weak child to protect. Even after all the training they subjected him to, it wasn't enough. He couldn't do anything when Shisui clashed with Kakashi, he couldn't even resist Sasuke and ended up almost being captured.

"I'm sorry," he repeated, this time with a hoarse tone and burning eyes.

He felt a softening from Obito, his chakra quieted in part leaving a different feeling: no more reproach and disappointment, but an instinctive need to comfort. Yet, despite this change, Obito did not extend any gesture towards him, he remained distant.

"I know," he said. "But I want you to understand that. You will stay here alone tonight as a punishment".

Naruto looked up surprised and hurt. Obito avoided looking at him.

"We leave tomorrow at dawn for Ame. Be awake".

Naruto pursed his lips, decided he wasn't going to plead like a baby, not this time. However, he felt a little dying inside when he saw both Obito and Konan leave the room, the door closed inside them. Naruto didn't need to get up and pull to know it was sealed.

He was left alone.

He threw back with his back, lying on the hard ground of the platform. He closed his eyes and let himself fall into his own consciousness. In reality he wasn't alone, he never really was.

When he opened his eyes the cave had changed and water lapped all over his figure. He peered over the bars that had suddenly appeared and smiled.

A rumbling came from the darkness.

**"Damn brat ..."**

And here's a little something about Naruto and Sasuke's past relationship and their failed attempt to start being friends. In the next chapter, from Sasuke's point of view, we will know why he stopped the meetings: c But if you want you can try to guess it <3  
Konan also arrives, who in this story is a bit like everyone's big sister! I must also say that in the future she will have a small role connected to Sakura, but I don't spoil <.<  
And Obito! Obito who has a slight morbid attachment to Naruto xD Here it was pretty tough, but I promise you there will be enough fluff from the two of them \*^\* Obviously nothing romantic, as mentioned I don't know yet how couples will end, so for now let's enjoy the free fluff :D  
Comments and thoughts are always welcome!

# Regrets

## Chapter Notes

I publish the chapter in advance because it is very short, sorry

*Sasuke tried to quickly get past the group of kids. The bell had already started and the break was over, he didn't like being late for class. But the road was blocked by a group of boys who, judging by their bulky size, must have been of some later class. At least they didn't seem to be angry with him, they turned maliciously to a skinny blond child, he realized he knew him and stopped.*

*But it was all so strange, he saw everything distorted as if he were looking through a blurry glass. Some movements were slow as if they were immersed in water, others so fast it made him dizzy. He could not hear the noises, Naruto was talking but his mouth opened and closed without letting out any sound. He could only hear the high-pitched trill of the bell, so loud it might have broken an eardrum.*

*He felt nauseous, he felt like he wasn't really there. He tried to understand what Naruto was saying, tried to follow the movement of his mouth.*

Friend.

*Was Naruto his friend? He remembered that they had trained together in secret, was that enough to consider him as such? Then he suddenly remembered that his mother had asked him not to see him again, his father had instead ordered him; he didn't want to disappoint his parents, Sasuke couldn't be his friend.*

*He took a step back, the words came out as strange as if someone else was speaking for him.*

*"What do you want? Leave me alone... loser "he added.*

*Naruto stared at him hurt, an expression so sharp that it seemed to pierce him like a shard of glass. Sasuke looked away and ran away, into the classroom and no longer paid attention to what was happening.*

*But as soon as he crossed the door, the room was gone and he ended up inside an undergrowth. Next to the giant sequoias of the Land of Fire, with the grass reaching his knees, there was a taller, dirtier and wilder Naruto, with longer hair and a more feral look.*

*"Liar," he hissed.*

*And Sasuke felt hands on his neck choke him.*



He woke up suddenly, panting. The ground below him continued to rock in a continuous rocking, he immediately realized that he was lying on a cart.

"Sleeping Beauty has woken up".

The lazy, familiar tone of his sensei caused a pain in his temple, his head was throbbing and his eyes continued to hurt too. He recorded what he had said and with difficulty sat up. He realized that he was in a gig, a farmer was driving the horses with his back to them. Kakashi had his usual little present expression, while Sakura's was full of concern.

"Sasuke! How are you?"

The teammate's tone was too sharp, Sasuke narrowed his eyes and tried to put his thoughts in order.

"How long have I been passed out?"

"Not much," Kakashi reassured him, for once he didn't have his face sunk between the pages of a porno. "Time to find a ride. We will soon be in Konoha".

He looked around, trying to drive away the remnants of that dream. While it wasn't quite a dream, it was a memory his mind had reworked after the latest events. Naruto had just unleashed the guilt he had kept at bay all that time, part of him had always felt guilty for not defending Naruto that day.

When his parents found out that he had started spending time with that child that everyone avoided, they had ordered him to stop talking to him, not to get involved in any way with him. Sasuke at the time was so desperate to have even a single ounce of approval from his father that he accepted without question. He had no longer gone to their training camp, at the Academy he had pretended that Naruto did not exist and the onetime Naruto had talked about their possible bond in front of others he had cruelly denied. A few days later Naruto was gone and a part of him always had the feeling that it was his fault.

*Was it really my fault?*

He rubbed his eyes, the further he went into those thoughts the more they burned. But it was a different feeling from the need to cry, it was as if he had pushed them too hard.

*If I disobeyed Dad would he stay? Would we have been friends?*

"Sasuke, be careful. You're about to reopen your wound," Himawari warned him.

He only realized then that he was no longer bleeding. He felt a band-aid as he ran his fingers.

"I cured you," Himawari gloated proudly.

Sasuke grunted affirmatively and went back to rubbing his eyes. He must have taken a really hard blow, it seemed to him that his head was splitting in two.

He heard Kakashi calling him, but he didn't answer too concentrated to fight against that feeling. It seemed to be directly related to the pain in his chest, what the regrets had caused.

He winced when Kakashi grabbed him firmly by the chin, forcing him to look at him, while with the other hand he pulled his fist away from his eyes. The sensei's face appeared clear as never before, he could see the shades of gray in his lazy eye, distinguish the very clear lashes and see the pores of the skin.

"Congratulations, Sasuke" Kakashi said slowly. "You have awakened your sharingan".

He didn't react, too surprised by the revelation. Sasuke had always imagined that his eyes would reveal themselves during a battle, at the moment he didn't even believe it. He blinked, looking at his teammates. Both had startled expressions, but the first to recover was Sakura who held out her forehead to look at himself. As he took it, the words Naruto had said that afternoon came to mind.

*To develop sharingan you have to experience severe emotional pain.*

Staring at the reflection of two red irises, Sasuke realized that he had told him the truth.

# Mission Report

## Chapter Notes

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

"I see" was the only thing the Sandaime said when Team Seven reported on the mission.

Sitting on his desk, with the big hat shading his visa and the robes hiding his body, with only his wrinkled hands folded under his chin... he showed all his long years.

Sasuke wanted to scream. I see. What was that supposed to mean? What did he understand? They had just returned from a damned D-grade escort mission with the news that a dangerous nukenin from Konoha had shown up alongside Uzumaki Naruto, and that was all he had to say?

Kakashi caught his furious gaze and placed a hand on his shoulder, silently telling him to stay calm.

"I'm sorry I couldn't stop them," Kakashi said.

The Sandaime shook his head.

"Don't worry. Your team's safety came first." He reassured him. "But now we have a point of reference to find Shisui, this is his first appearance in years. And Uzumaki Naruto is with him, alive".

"We will send an ANBU team on their trail," Danzō guaranteed, alongside the Hokage.

Sasuke didn't like that old man very much, Danzo left him with an unpleasant feeling, as if in his presence he had to always look over his shoulder. He also didn't like the obsession he had for his brother, every time Sasuke thought about it he felt uncomfortable.

"You can go," the Sandaime then said looking gently at the three children. "Kakashi, I would like you to stay for the details."

Sasuke was reluctant to leave the room, he wanted to know everything and he wanted to participate in the rescue mission. Maybe it was because it was Naruto, but he felt it concerned him firsthand. Despite this he bowed respectfully as Himawari and Sakura did, ready to leave the room.

When Sasuke was at the door, however, he remembered a detail.

"Hokage-sama" he said, catching the attention of the adults. He lifted his chin, showing confidence. "Before leaving, Shisui said a few things."

He paused, curious to see the reaction of the Hokage and his adviser, but both remained stoic.

"What, Sasuke-kun?" the Sandaime urged him gently.

"He wanted me to ask my father if he still has that ambition," he replied with confidence, paused for another few seconds and then continued: "And if you still implement that last solution".

This time he thought he saw a glint of concern in the Hokage's mild eyes, but he was too quick to understand if it had really been there or if he had imagined it. After all, Danzo at his side hadn't moved a single facial muscle and he was the Hokage's right arm, he knew everything.

"Something else?" inquired the Sandaime in the same sweet tone.

Sasuke shook his head and the Sandaime looked at him thoughtfully.

"Shisui's are very specific questions, Sasuke-kun," he considered. "But I'm afraid I don't have an answer for either of them. I don't know what he is referring to".

Sasuke pursed his lips in disappointment at the non-response. Along with the guilt, those words from Shisui had prodded him throughout the journey. There had been so much bitterness while he said them, but also a kind of pain.

Thinking it was a final dismissal, he nodded his chin and prepared to leave the room. But when he was about to close the door, the Sandaime called him back.

"Ah, Sasuke-kun," he said. "It is better not to say this last thing to your father. It would unnecessarily disturb him to know that he was mentioned by a criminal".

Hearing his cousin called that way made his heart leap, but then he was just what Shisui had become by leaving the village, a traitor.

Sasuke left the office full of bitterness and ignored both Sakura and Himawari. He had to talk to his brother.

"You really don't know what Shisui was talking about?" Kakashi asked as soon as his little genin were gone and the security seals reactivated.

Compared to the sweetness that used to be on Sandaime while talking to Sasuke, now his face was a stone mask.

"This is classified," he replied impassively.

Kakashi nodded, because in spite of himself he had always been a loyal ninja and would never disobey his Hokage. If it was a secret he didn't want to share, he had his reasons, it

wasn't up to him to question his choices, it would have been betrayal.

"This is all very suspicious," Hiruzen resumed. "During your absence, the Forbidden Scroll was stolen".

Kakashi opened his only visible eye slightly.

"The one guilty?"

"Apparently, Mizuki. We caught him just before you returned with your team. He was on the border of the country, ready to leave him, but the Scroll was not with him".

"He stole it for someone else".

"The question is who," Hiruzen sighed. "Ibiki-san's early investigations suggested it was an Iwa commission."

"But?" Kakashi guessed and knew it wasn't a good answer if Hokage himself was hesitant.

"Itachi-kun confirmed that Mizuki was under genjutsu, a genjutsu so powerful that it appeared to have been operated by a sharingan," replied Danzo.

Kakashi concentrated on keeping his expression neutral, not to let his eye narrow with annoyance. There was always something that troubled him when Danzo mentioned Itachi, the way he trailed his name ... there was so much smug possession that it gave him shivers. But he managed to hold back the discomfort, focusing solely on the Sandaime.

"Do you think it was Shisui's doing?"

"It would explain many things ... There are no other nukenin Uchiha, he is the only sharingan that is outside the village. It would also clarify his presence in the Land of Fire on the same day the Forbidden Scroll was stolen. It cannot be mere coincidence. "

Kakashi found himself agreeing with him, coincidences in the shinobi world rarely proved to be such. Unfortunately he didn't have the confirmation his Hokage wanted.

"In our meeting Shisui gave no sign of possessing the Scroll. If you hadn't told me now, I would never have suspected it".

"Is there anything else you couldn't tell us in front of your subordinates?" Danzo insisted.

Kakashi didn't look at him, he kept his attention only on the Hokage.

"Naruto knows about Kyūbi," he said.

A startled expression flickered only for a few seconds in the small eyes of the Sandaime, after which he returned controlled and impassive. He let out a tired sigh.

"Obviously it was Shisui who told him about it," he reasoned.

Besides the fact that Naruto was the Jinchuriki of Kyûbi had always been open secret in the village, despite the attempt to hide it and everyone knew it.

"Do you think they're working for someone?" Danzo asked, intruding into the silence left by Hiruzen.

Kakashi shook his head disconsolately.

"I'm sorry, I can't tell. In our brief confrontation there was nothing that left him thinking. But..."he hesitated briefly.

"Go on".

"According to Sasuke, Naruto told him about an alleged family of ex-shinobi who trained him with the chakra. Maybe they are affiliated with a group of other nukenin,"he supposed.

"That's the most likely thing," the Sandaime agreed. "Shisui is not only sought after by Konoha, but also by the Cloud and the Mist. He must have someone who protects him from bounty hunters and keeps him hidden".

"My ANBUs will find out," Danzo guaranteed.

"I will also notify Jiraiya. You said that Shisui was wearing a cloak with red clouds ... Maybe he can tell us if there were activities by shinobi clothes in this way. "

Kakashi cleared his throat. "I would like to participate in the research".

There was a brief silence at his request. Danzo looked at him with interest, really considering the option. Kakashi, along with the Inuzuka, had always been a good ninja pursuer; not to mention that he had recently been in contact with the scent of Naruto, now he could recognize it better than the faded memories of four years ago.

But Hiruzen shook his head firmly.

"You have your team to look after," he said kindly. "They need you".

Kakashi wanted to disagree, as since he had withdrawn him from ANBU to make him a jonin-sensei; that was not his role. As Naruto had recalled, he was Friends-Killers Kakashi, he was the best Hound in ANBU, the deadliest shadow who killed in cold blood. It was crazy that Hiruzen thought he could raise children, he was too broken to do that.

All he wanted at that moment was to save Minato's son, to remedy at least one of his faults.

Instead the Hokage only said:

"You can go".

And Kakashi left the room.

He found Itachi at the Naka temple, just as his father had indicated to him.

Sasuke hesitated a few seconds longer than he should on the threshold, feeling a strange sense of inadequacy in front of that sacred place, allowing Itachi to realize his presence by himself. Sasuke saw him finish the silent prayer and leave an offering, then walked out to him with a gentle smile.

"You are back from the mission," Itachi commented, squinting at the light too strong in comparison to the shadow of the temple.

Much to Sasuke's annoyance, he still managed to locate the patch on his forehead and the bandages on his arms. Alarmed Itachi grabbed him gently by the face and began to study the severity of the damage.

"Are you hurt?" he asked apprehensively and confused.

Even though they had come out of the Village it was still a simple D-grade mission, after all Sasuke was still a genin.

The thirteen-year-old escaped his grasp with an angry and rebellious gesture.

"I'm fine," he complained superiorly. "We were attacked, but I managed it".

"Have you been to the hospital?"

He glared at him. "Himawari thought about it," he replied, breaking away with a nervous jerk. "It's nothing," he pointed out.

Itachi stared at him intently and Sasuke hated that look, because his brother could always understand everything he was hiding.

"What happened?" he asked in fact.

Sasuke tried to resist his serious, piercing gaze, but eventually found himself blowing the truth out, even though everyone - even his mother - had begged him not to.

"We met... Shisui".

His words had an immediate effect and managed to wring a reaction from Itachi, even if it was only a slight stiffening, which usually always managed to be illegible and imperturbable.

Sasuke didn't know why Shisui had betrayed the village. Shisui was not a topic that was talked about willingly in the clan and even more so it was taboo in their home, given the strong bond that had existed between him and his brother. They had always been inseparable and Sasuke really didn't understand why Shisui had abandoned Konoha, Itachi, to become a nukenin.

To be honest, he hadn't given it much thought since he became genin. He was now an adult, a ninja, and had other things to think about. But seeing him after all that time had destabilized him.

"Was it he who attacked you?" Itachi asked after a very long silence. His voice was detached as usual, in fact it was more so than usual.

"Yeah... I mean, not really," he hesitated. "He reacted when Kakashi-sensei tried to hit him. It was an accident".

Sasuke did not know why he was justifying his missing cousin, perhaps the childhood affection still rooted in him was somehow involved.

Itachi nodded. "Let's go home," he only said.

It was obvious that he didn't want to talk about it, that it was still an open wound, and surely if he bit his mouth and swallowed Itachi the toad he would not have investigated further.

But Sasuke was too curious.

"He told me something," he erupted.

Itachi turned to look at him again, silently encouraging him to continue. Sasuke frowned, as if trying to remember the exact words.

"He told me to ask dad if he still has that ambition," he reported, "while he told Kakashi to ask if the Sandaime will ever use that last solution."

As soon as he said it, Itachi visibly stiffened. That was not a good sign and he realized that those cryptic words had a dangerous meaning, so much so that even his brother worried.

"What does it mean?" he then asked with determination.

"I have no idea".

He was lying and realizing it sent blood to his head. Sasuke was almost thirteen, had graduated from the academy and was a ninja with his own team. He was now formally an adult, Itachi could not continue to treat him like an unsuspecting child.

"Yes you know," he challenged him. "What did he mean?"

"I told you, I don't know".

Sasuke stared hatefully at his receding back and blurted out:



"He had a message for you too!" He waited for it to stop before hissing: "He asked if you know the place where the tortoise passed the hare at noon."

Itachi stopped, but with his back he was unable to recognize his expression. It was just obvious that he was looking down, stiff with clenched fists.

"What a foolish thing to say," he commented alone, quietly, as if those words had slipped on him like water.

Sasuke didn't ask more and joined him at the side. When they got home, no one raised the Shisui topic anymore.

## Chapter End Notes

Next chapter: KakaIta!!! Finally!!!

# Consolation

## Chapter Summary

Itachi and Kakashi, finally <3

## Chapter Notes

Note: the flashback is inspired by a one-shot of the beautiful collection "Little Gifts and little secrets" by Mirenella. That was the first KakaIta I ever read and it was love at first sight. I wanted to pay homage to her by shooting a very similar scene in the first KakaIta scene I ever wrote. Hope you like it!

*Itachi crossed his arms over his chest and bit his lip so as not to let out a sigh of pure exasperation, it would have been unprofessional since he was addressed to his superior. He then looked disapprovingly at Kakashi intent on stretching his leg muscles on the lawn.*

*"Itachi, what a pleasure to see you," he greeted lightly, unimpressed by the carbon eyes that emitted sparks.*

*"Senpai" said 11-year-old Uchiha. "We should have left an hour ago".*

*Hatake Kakashi's delays were legendary in Konoha, everyone knew how he even kept the Hokage waiting. But during the ANBU missions he had always been punctual, starting from the gate to the second section, especially if these missions were fundamental for the village. It was the first time Itachi had been delayed and he had also felt worried enough to look for him.*

*Instead he was there, with no real reason to miss the appointment.*

*"Senpai, what are you doing?" he insisted.*

*"Excuse me, but as I came I met Gai" Kakashi began and when the other jōnin of Konoha nearby was named he raised his thumb in his direction, "and asked me for a speed challenge. I couldn't refuse, so here I am. We will leave as soon as I have finished".*

*Itachi felt a little confused, but kept his expression immobile and indecipherable. He didn't know Hatake well, not outside the Rō team at least, and all he had were the rumors of shinobi who loved to gossip. He knew his tragic history, of his father and the team, and he had always seen the cool, commanding figure he was in the captain's guise.*

*It was the first time Itachi had seen him without dark shadows in his eyes.*

*"Will you really run?" he asked without thinking too much.*

*Kakashi gave him a long side glance and Itachi noticed the satisfied smile hidden by the mask.*

*"Obviously. Will you stay and cheer for me?"*

*He did not react to the question to subdue the sudden surprise, he was recently in the Ro team - it was true - but that was the first time ever that Kakashi had been so friendly. He resolved to tilt his head back, letting the locks of black hair fall over his shoulders onto his back.*

*"I will stay and make sure we leave when you win."*

*He realized his mistake too late, he saw it reflected in the ironic and mischievous look that Kakashi gave him.*

*"Do you think I'll win? How cute, Itachi-kun! "*

*He bit the inside of his cheek and tried not to blush, for some reason he felt like he had let out something too big and he always had to remain controlled and calm.*

*"Actually Gai is very fast, maybe faster than me," Kakashi resumed in a plaintive voice. "I don't know if I can do it without a good luck charm".*

*"A good luck charm?"*

*"Yes, to wear in the race, in battle. In the books all the heroes have a good luck charm, a sign of affection from their loved one ".*

*Itachi couldn't hold back his curiosity.*

*"Do you have a loved one?"*

*But Kakashi did not satisfy his curiosity, he just sighed, accentuating that fake distraught air.*

*"I'll have to run without ... I will definitely lose without a good luck charm, without moral support ..."*

*He stared at Itachi for a long time and the boy found himself sighing in resignation. He reached out to her hair and pulled off the elastic that enclosed them in a ponytail. The smooth, dark wisps spread over his shoulders and back, delicately framing his thin face.*

*"Is this okay?"*

*Although the joke had been made by himself, Kakashi was surprised and hesitated to take the simple rubber band, perhaps he didn't expect Itachi would be in the game. But then slowly Kakashi raised his hand and took the tape, he did so cautiously as if expecting him to retract the offer. Eventually he slipped it on his wrist like a bracelet.*

*"It's perfect," he guaranteed, proudly showing it to him. "With this I will win immediately!"*

*"I hope," he just said, trying to be as cold as possible.*

*He turned to go find a place to sit and be able to watch the two idiots challenge each other at the same time, but Kakashi called him back shouting his name.*

*"What?" he asked resignedly, turning around.*

*Kakashi's smile was perfectly visible even though the only portion of skin uncovered was his right eye. He opened it ajar as he said:*

*"You are very cute with your hair down."*

*Itachi turned his head, hoping fast enough to hide the blush. Sure, if Kakashi's giggle meant anything, it wasn't fast enough.*

**\*\***

The empty stomach was painful to bear, but Kakashi ignored the hunger cramps and continued on his way. He knew that the fridge in his apartment was as empty as his stomach, that he would not find anything to eat, so he never even thought of going back to rest in his apartment. Just as the idea of stopping in any of the many gastronomic establishments that lined Konoha had not occurred to him.

He was hungry, but he wasn't going to eat.

Instead he walked until midnight passed and came to the edge of the village, to the special training grounds for ANBU. Despite being withdrawn against his will, he still knew the seals to access them to train. The interesting thing about those training camps was that, unlike the standard ones also used by the genin, there were already sets of weapons and it was not necessary to bring your own.

Kakashi carefully studied the range of short swords present and chose the most congenial and balanced with his movements. It was since he left ANBU that he hadn't trained in kenjutsu, it would have done him good to stretch.

The next hour was filled by Kakashi's blows, by the sharp sound of the air being cut by a very fast and lethal blade. The muscles in his arms began to tremble after a while, the sweat stuck to his forehead and his stomach aching from the absence of food.

He continued until he sensed that someone was breaking through the protective barriers to enter the training ground. Instinctively he stiffened, but then he tried not to strain too much and continue with his kata. It could have been any sleepless ANBU who came there to train.

He stopped altogether however when he recognized the warm and reassuring impression of chakra. He lowered his stiff, offensive posture, muscles screaming in need of a stretch after exertion, and turned to look at Itachi.

There were white lights at the training ground, they brightened the night enough to make the Uchiha distinguishable in the dark. His skin shone pale as the moon, but his black clothes matched the dark circumstances well.

"I knew I found you here."

His low, hoarse voice was also in perfect harmony with the late night. Kakashi narrowed his eyes, a little ashamed of how the sound of that voice was enough to calm some of the pain.

"I'm so predictable?" Kakashi asked, trying to joke.

Itachi was holding a closed paper bag in his hand, before answering he threw it at him and Kakashi managed to catch it.

"I'm afraid so," he said.

He opened the bag and smiled to himself at the contents: dango, of course.

"What if I told you I'm not hungry?"

Itachi's gaze was serious, not at all scratched by Kakashi's attempts.

"I know you haven't had dinner," he replied imperturbably.

Of course he knew. Itachi knew all his coping mechanisms: obsessive training, food deprivation, and sleep deprivation were just a few points on the long list of bad habits Kakashi had developed to make guilt more bearable. And as Itachi knew these things, Kakashi also knew that nothing he would say would distract Itachi from the self-imposed mission of taking care of him.

With a sigh he then gave up, put the sword back in its place and stretched a bit to loosen the muscles. In the meantime Itachi had gone to sit on the lawn that bordered the field, waiting for Kakashi to do the same.

"I know you would have preferred something else, but the dango shop is the only one that stays open so late," Itachi apologized.

"I actually preferred not to eat." Kakashi muttered darkly, but took a bite before Itachi ordered him to do so anyway.

In spite of his words, as soon as his tongue touched the softness of those sweet dumplings, the pangs of hunger went back to goad him. He had to try hard not to swallow each dumpling in one bite.

Itachi wasn't looking at him, of course, he had averted his gaze as soon as Kakashi dropped his mask revealing the rest of his face. Itachi had always been the only person not to push or

come up with crazy plans to tear off his mask. Even now that he was the only one who was allowed to see him completely naked, he left his space outside of intimacy.

It was therefore Kakashi who took the opportunity to spy on Itachi in secret, his gaze fixed on his elegant, sharp profile, similar to a kunai's blade. Equally beautiful, just as lethal. The hair fell on the sides a bit disheveled, tousled from the long day and from having been forced all the time in the usual low ponytail. The marks on his face were more pronounced than usual, the dark circles stained the eyelids with violet colors and, together with the lowered crease of the lips, gave a melancholy and tired look to Itachi.

"Long day?" he asked, even though the answer was obvious.

Itachi's days were always long and tiring. Even if he was not in ROOT, for some reason he was Danzo's favorite ANBU and the old councilor always required his presence in the most delicate missions; in addition, the Hokage had told him that Itachi had discovered that Mizuki had been placed under genjutsu, so he must have participated in the research and interrogation.

"The usual" replied in fact with disinterest.

He ventured to turn around to make sure Kakashi was actually eating. He caught the man staring at him in turn, his eyes fixed on his. He had already finished all the dango, but he gave no sign of wanting to put the mask back on. It was always so rare to be able to see Kakashi's entire face and when he could do it in such a simple and spontaneous way, simply by turning around, Itachi felt a warmth in his stomach that tightened his throat. Especially when he looked down at her lips: each time it was like seeing them for the first time.

"Sasuke told me you met Shisui," he murmured. "I'm sorry".

Kakashi broke eye contact and let out a long sigh.

"Why are you apologizing? It didn't happen because of you. I should be the one to apologize, I couldn't stop him "he pointed out bitterly.

"You had to protect your team" traced without realizing the same words of the Sandaime.

"Sasuke was injured."

He knew he had hit a nerve, he knew even before the little silence that accompanied his words. Kakashi knew he was important to Itachi, but he knew with greater certainty that nothing was more important to him than Sasuke. Sasuke would have been in first place in any situation, even in hell, even in the face of his own life and dignity.

"It's just a scratch, at least that's what he says," Itachi finally replied, unperturbed. "And he took offense at anyone who worried. He's fine, it could have ended worse".

After all, Shisui was the same boy who at sixteen had managed to hurt Danzo and one of his ROOT teams, even if he had lost an eye in doing so. Itachi bit his lip at that thought, the memory of Shisui with his face dripping with blood and his crazy words mingled with that of

Danzo in front of the Hokage, as he declared that Uchiha Shisui had attacked him shortly after he had shown some grievances on the his plan.

He felt a pang in his chest, never in life before would he have thought of evaluating Shisui as an enemy. But now he was what he had become: an enemy of the Leaf.

"There was Naruto with him".

Kakashi's words tore him out of his sad thoughts. Itachi rolled his eyes and looked at him in disbelief.

"Really? Is he still alive? "

Kakashi frowned. "Didn't Sasuke tell you?"

"Sasuke has been silent all evening. All he said was grumpy monosyllables to our mother's questions, "he replied bitterly.

"So he didn't even tell you that he developed sharingan?"

If Itachi had been surprised before, now he was shocked. He looked at Kakashi as if he were joking, but the serious expression on his face made no mistake.

"No, he didn't tell us ..." he murmured sadly, his heart heavy.

He had always believed that when the time came he would be the first to tell, that he would brag about it to the whole family. Instead he had kept it secret.

"I thought he couldn't wait to develop it," Kakashi considered, probably coming to the same conclusion in front of that oddity. "Instead it has been strange since it happened ..."

"Do you think Shisui may have told him something about it?"

He shook his head. "Shisui arrived when I was there too, they didn't talk about sharingan. But he spent many hours alone with Naruto, I don't want that..." he sighed. "I do not know".

Itachi did not answer and they remained silent. A light wind had picked up as the night went by, but at high altitude it had to blow much harder. The clear clouds moved very fast across the inky sky, passing over the stars and the moon like steam curtains. Fast and elusive, just like ...

"I couldn't get him back."

Itachi was not surprised that Kakashi had started speaking again, nor was it surprised by the cracked tone. It simply caused a pain in his chest, because it was always painful to see a strong and powerful man like Kakashi suffer and bend in pain. Naruto's disappearance had always been his weak point, ever since the incident happened, just as Shisui's betrayal was his.

"He was there, in front of me, I managed to grab him... but it wasn't enough. He's gone, again ". Kakashi's breathing was raspy, as if he were running when he was just trying to stem the negative emotions that upset him. "And you know the worst thing? He didn't want to come, he was terrified at the very idea. Terrified *of me* ".

"Kakashi ..."

"He knew about Rin. And of the Fox. Obviously Shisui told him, but who knows what else he knows! Now he knows why everyone hated him, what has been done to him since his first day of life. Who knows... maybe he also knows about his father ”.

Itachi made no attempt to interrupt him this time, as the prospect alone would have been terrible. Naruto had many reasons to hate Konoha and what was worse was that he had enormous power within him, a power that he could have directed against Konoha. And at that point Kakashi what would he do? Would he have been willing to fight his beloved sensei's son?

*If Shisui attacks Konoha, what will I do?*

"It wasn't your fault," Itachi said.

The wind kept rising, probably it would rain early that morning.

Kakashi let out a long, loud sigh, a sigh that explicitly made it clear that he thought exactly the opposite. After all, Kakashi tended to blame himself for everything, even for what was not under his control. But he said nothing, the moment of vulnerability had already passed and he was already questioning the negative turbulence that had prompted him to speak. He was a shinobi, shinobi do this: they take pain and go on, protect.

"Maa, it's getting really late," he considered straining a light tone.

Itachi nodded. "Let's go back. It is likely to be colder tonight ”.

He lowered his dark eyes, feeling that Kakashi had reached out to interlace their fingers. Throughout the conversation they had been sitting side by side, but they had never touched; Itachi always preferred to wait for Kakashi to take the initiative. Once on a mission he had the bad idea of touching his shoulder without letting himself be perceived and the captain was ready to kill. They were at peace, but part of Kakashi was still anchored in the war.

Itachi returned the gesture, squeezing hard enough to let him know that he was really there and that he was tangible, not a ghost.

"Do you want ... to stay with me?"

Itachi smiled to himself, knowing from the beginning that he would not be returning to the Uchiha complex that night and that was fine. Kakashi lived in a basic apartment, with only one tiny bed, but they always managed to fit into it.

"Sure," he said sweetly. "But tomorrow morning I'll have to leave early enough."



"Do you have a mission?" Kakashi asked.

Itachi didn't answer right away, hesitating.

"Sort of ..." he finally buzzed.

*Itachi, do you know the place where the tortoise passed the hare at midday?*

# Morning

## Chapter Notes

I want to apologize for the long absence. Unfortunately it wasn't an easy time for me. My family and my boyfriend got sick with covid. Fortunately, we're all fine now. But it was a bad time and I still carry the stress and the aftermath. I haven't had much time to think about this story. I will try to fix it.

*Shisui landed in front of the Naka temple cautiously. On his patrol of the district he had sensed someone in there. It could have been any Uchiha, but for some time it had been imposed that no one should enter the temple after midnight. Anyone who got in had to be turned away.*

*His instinct told him to move cautiously and Shisui, without knowing why, found himself humoring him. He entered as quiet as a cat, suppressing his presence and breathing quietly. Torches had been lit inside, casting cones of light across the floor. In the dim light he saw a figure wrapped in a heavy black cloak, the mask he was wearing immediately put him on alert.*

*He drew his short sword and took a defensive posture.*

*"Who are you?"*

*His growl echoed off the temple walls, but the unknowing figure didn't flinch. He slowly turned to face him, there was only a hole on the mask and the eye he revealed had an iris that Shisui knew very well.*

*"You're an Uchiha," he considered. "Who are you? What are you doing here?"*

*He was ready for no answer, but the stranger spoke.*

*"Who I am doesn't matter. As for my presence ... I am here to take note of a big lie. "*

*The man's voice was heavy, Shisui was sure he had never heard it. But he knew all the Uchiha who had developed the sharingan, it was impossible that he could not identify him.*

*He ignored his enigmatic words, the cold sweat ran down the back of the neck while carrying to have probably a nukenin ahead.*

*"You're not from the Village, are you?"*

*"No," the stranger admitted as if it were no problem to reveal it. "I left him a long time ago".*

*Fuck, that really made him a traitor. But it was impossible: there had been no nukenin Uchiha for generations. The clan was so jealous of their bloodline that they made sure there were no Uchiha outsiders in Konoha.*

*In all of history, only one had existed.*

*He swallowed. "Are you Uchiha Madara?"*

*There was a long silence from the man, perhaps Sishui had managed to surprise him. Then he heard it make a strange sound, like a stifled gasp. He realized he was laughing bitterly.*

*"What remains of his will," he admitted.*

*Shisui tried not to let the surprise paralyze him. Even though Madara should have died years ago, he was still one of the greatest shinobi in history, unsurpassed by anyone. It was not absurd that his abilities had prevented him from growing old and die.*

*But fuck Uchiha Madara in the village. It wasn't good news. Panic began to circulate in his veins.*

*"You are Uchiha Kagami's grandson, aren't you? I heard about you. They consider you the most gifted Uchiha of this generation ".*

*Shisui was brought back to reality by Madara's words, increased his grip on the hilt and forced himself to move to attack. Madara must have guessed his intentions.*

*"In different circumstances I would have gladly measured myself with you. But I'm not here to fight, relax ".*

*Shisui did not relax at all.*

*"So what are you doing here?" he asked harshly.*

*"I'm here to knowledge" Madara said, and turned his head.*

*Shisui followed the direction of his gaze and saw the Uchiha tablets, the ones that contained the secular knowledge of his clan, every secret of the sharingan. He had read them when he had unlocked his ocular art.*

*"What is it that Uchiha Madara doesn't know about sharingan?" he asked him genuinely confused.*

*Madara laughed again. "I'm not interested in the surface, but what's underneath it. What only certain eyes can see ".*

*In saying this, the sharingan visible from the hole in the mask spun around itself until it changed into a new geometric figure. Shisui stared at Madara's Mangekyo, and before he knew it, his eyes too had lit up as he showed his Mangekyo Sharingan.*

*"Oh," Madara commented slightly impressed. "The rumors about you are correct. You are really gifted ".*

*Shisui deactivated the sharingan and cursed himself for letting it happen, he was not going to show him his secret weapon. Something in him had simply reacted on instinct.*

*"So you've read what the boards hide," Madara continued.*

*"No," he replied. "The elders have forbidden it".*

*Madara laughed contemptuously. "I see they continue to be old fools. It doesn't matter, you would find written only the most intricate and ancient deception of the shinobi world: the illusion of peace ".*

*An alarm bell rang in Shisui's head and the mere prospect made him blanch.*

*"Are you here for the coup?" he blew.*

*It was impossible to decipher Madara with that stupid mask.*

*"No. I no longer have any interest in the clan or in this stupid village ".*

*"So what do you want?" he blurted out.*

*Madara paused, as if he was really impressed by that question. The silence lasted only a few seconds, but it was so heavy it oppressed Shisui.*

*"I don't know," he finally said. "Now there is nothing left, everything is just a lie. There is no longer any way to redeem this world ".*

*Those words seemed the prelude to destruction and a realization struck Shisui.*

*"It was you, eight years ago. You have... freed the Kyūbi, "he stammered.*

*Despite the mask, he almost suspected that Madara was smiling mockingly beneath it.*

*"Don't tell anyone you met me, Uchiha Shisui," he said. "If you do, I'll personally kill everyone you love," he threatened.*

*The second later he disappeared, as if swallowed in the air, like a ghost that had never been there. Only when he was alone, Shisui remembered to breathe again.*

*He kept the secret. Nobody would have believed him anyway.*

The sun had already risen, but because of the high mountains surrounding the refuge it was nowhere to be seen. The sky was still black when Deidara landed with his giant bird of clay.

"Well, I think it's fair to tell you that I'm not in the mood," the bomber immediately began, crossing his arms over his chest. "Kakuzo doesn't want to give me the money to buy more clay, so I'm pretty angry. Tobi, please, I need to be left alone, don't start acting like a fool ... "

Obito passed him without saying a word. He wore the orange mask, so it was impossible to tell what his expression of him was, but the language of his tense, dry and hunched body was quite understandable. Obito was pissed off and didn't want to joke around in Tobi's guise.

Deidara looked at him in disbelief - and also a little offended - that Uchiha hadn't started calling him senpai, shouting, begging for more details about his bad mood and then insulting Kakuzo together. Instead he went to sit somewhere apart from the travel space he had created for the flight.

He looked at Konan, seeking explanations. "What's wrong with him?"

The woman shrugged. "There have been complications."

"Do we even have that parchment?"

"It has been recovered," she guaranteed.

The third and last to climb was Naruto, his expression very sleepy. He did not go, as would have been predictable, to sit next to Tobi, to rest his head on him and go back to sleep. Instead, he went to the opposite side, with his back to the adult.

"The complications ... that is, did they fight?" asked Deidara curiously.

Since he was on the team - well, just a year in reality - he had seen the two just go to love and agree, they were almost disgusting how much they loved each other. Finally, something interesting seemed to have happened.

No one answered him, but the tense silence was a clear affirmative answer. Too bad no one seemed to want to add anything more, which annoyed him. The prolonged silence was uncomfortable, he couldn't wait to leave; also it was quite chilly so early in the morning, especially in the mountains.

"Where's Shisui?" barked Deidara seeing that after Naruto no one else was climbing on the clay bird.

Finally Tobi took the floor. But his tone was not that of a carefree and clumsy teenager, but a very dark and serious one. Deidara had rarely heard him speak like that and never spoke to him.

"The boy has a date," he said scornfully. "We leave without him, he will join us."

Deidara did not argue and did not ask what he meant. The final tone was enough for him to make his creature of clay and chakra take off.

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Despite his predictions, it didn't rain in the morning. When a ray of the newborn sun hit him in the face, Itachi opened his eyes and looked out the window at a clear, cloudless sky. Kakashi was at his side, his eyes closed and his breath steady. But Itachi knew that his companion had woken up at the same moment. Kakashi had one of the lightest sleeps he knew, he seemed to be alert to his surroundings too while he slept.

Knowing this, he dressed as silently as possible. It was still five in the morning, there was no need to create too much noise.

He was about to leave when he felt fingers clinging to his shirt. He turned, seeing Kakashi with narrowed eyes and a barely noticeable smile.

"Come back alive," the Hatake said sleepily.

Itachi smiled. "Obviously".

His heart was beating mad for what he was about to do.

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Naruto let out a sigh of relief when he saw the statue of the man-who-made-his-tongue-open-mouth approach. Ame had been his home for four years now, but the constant rain was something he would never get used to.

Shortly after, they entered the statue, landing in the large covered space. It was a relief not to be hit by the rain anymore, Naruto felt wet to the core.

Pain was waiting for them, the disquieting concentric eyes of the rinnegan lingered on every member that got off the flying vehicle.

"Where is Shisui?"

"On a date," he replied angrily Obito. He passed him by his side without looking at him or taking off his mask. "We have recovered the Scroll".

Pain didn't flinch, his face remained impassive. His inexpressiveness always disturbed Naruto, he was so different from... Nagato. Nagato smiled kindly at him, while he suspected Pain couldn't even do it.

They waited for Konan to join them, then the three disappeared to analyze the new loot obtained.

Deidara there watched them go and sniffed.

"Thank you for the loving welcome" he said to nothing, but then shook his head in resignation and looked at the child beside him. Naruto was soaked as a chick. "Hot bath, does it sound good?" he proposed, also uncomfortable in his cold clothes.

"Yes, please," Naruto piped.

"So maybe you also tell me what you did that pissed Tobi so much."

Despite Deidara's cheerful tone, Naruto wasn't very keen on the proposal.

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Sasuke was concentrated as he studied the various scrolls one after the other. He had spent all night awake thinking and rethinking what Naruto had told him about the sharingan. Eventually he had come to the conclusion that the only way he had to resolve that doubt was to see what had been passed down by the clan.

As soon as he woke up he sneaked into his father's personal study and searched the archive, he knew that all the secrets of the clan were kept there, including on the sharingan. He also knew that they could only be read by those who possessed ocular art, but now that was no longer a problem.

At that thought he ran his fingers at the corner of one eye, thoughtfully. He still struggled to relate to the thought that he had finally awakened the sharingan, but it had been so quick, unexpected ...

"Sasuke, what are you doing here?"

The child jumped almost as he dropped the parchment he was holding. He was kneeling on the bottom drawer of a large closet, the scrolls scattered around him as evidence of his mischief.

He turned to see his father in the doorway, he had been so focused on his search that he forgot what was around him. What a stupid beginner's mistake!

He lowered his eyes guilty. He didn't know whether or not he had disobeyed a rule, but the mere fact that he was there without permission seemed reason enough to feel guilty.

"I ... I was looking for information on the sharingan" Sasuke admitted.

He expected his father to scold him, but instead he only saw him shake his head with a mixture of exasperation. He went to his side and picked up the scrolls he had left lying around, putting each one back in its place.

"Every good ninja knows how to seek alone the information he seeks," Fugaku said, "but in this case you could talk to me. What do you want to know specifically? "

Sasuke had no intention of wasting that opportunity.

"How does sharingan develop? Does something in particular have to happen, or does it happen ... by chance? "

His father didn't look at him, he kept putting everything back in its place as he answered.

"Something rarely happens by chance in the shinobi world. An Uchiha is able to awaken the sharingan only after having attained sufficient strength to master it. He especially he must have enough control over the chakra to balance its use without drying up instantly. For this reason, there is no precise age in which it can develop and not all Uchiha have it, it depends on the strength of the individual ".

Sasuke nodded to himself. This was exactly what he had been taught all his life, what he had always known. But Naruto's words and what had happened the day before gave another explanation. Sasuke knew he still had no control over his perfect chakra, he still had to learn to climb trees correctly without using his hands. Yet he had awakened the sharingan.

"Many say they awakened their own at a time when they had to push their limits. This is probably the causative factor, the effort that leads to awakening, "concluded his father.

He bit his lip, thinking about it. He actually made an effort he wasn't used to to control his chakra by meeting Naruto, who forced him to jump on the roofs of houses. He had learned to do so stable only at that time. And even the small fight with Shisui, perhaps the adrenaline in the circulation had pushed his body beyond the limits he was used to.

"You look confused."

His father's implicit question roused him. He bit his lip, not knowing how to explain himself without getting too unbalanced, especially without revealing too much.

"I was told that sharingan only develops after severe... emotional pain."

When he said it, he didn't expect to get such a violent reaction. Fugaku slammed the drawers shut, slamming them so hard that the sound overlapped with his words.

"Where did you hear it?" he asked coldly.

Sasuke immediately realized that he couldn't tell the truth.

"Um ... I think some Academy teacher said so ..."



Fugaku's expression tightened even more, his brow furrowed and his eyebrows narrowed to touch.

"I'll have to talk to the Sandaime. It is inadmissible that he let that certain false speculation still tadpole. "

"It's not true?"

"Absolutely no. This was just the Nindaime theory, he was convinced that our power was born from traumatic events and for this we were... crazy ”.

Sasuke's eyes widened in disbelief. "Did Nindaime-sama think this of us?"

He felt cut in two by the look his father gave him.

“Tobirama-sama feared and hated us. He was prejudiced against us because of the wars that preceded the construction of Konoha ”.

At that discovery Sasuke felt annihilated, his heart aching. The Second Hokage, one of his heroes, one of the people he tried to imitate, had despised his clan ...

Fugaku softened his gaze at Sasuke's aching expression.

“Sharingan is not a curse, the Uchiha are not cursed. Don't let anyone make you believe it ”.

The boy nodded, not knowing how else to react. He wondered if that was why his clan seemed to instill such fear in civilians, fear that often turned into contempt. Was it because a Hokage had despised them?

He clenched his hands into fists. He promised himself that once he became Hokage he would prove their mistake to everyone.

"Oh, dad," he called with a frown.

"There's more?"

He clenched his hands into fists, seeking his determinations. He felt anxious to ask that question, the Hokage's warning had scared him.

"You ... do you have an ambition?" he asked him swallowing.

Fugaku didn't blink. "Every good shinobi has a goal."

"What's your?"

He expected his father not to answer, but his expression became more solemn.

“The good of the Uchiha Clan. As clan leader I have been entrusted with the fate of each Uchiha, it is my duty to protect them and guide them towards a prosperous future. I have no other ambition than this ”.

It made sense, so Sasuke nodded. From Shisui's words he had feared that his father had dangerous goals, but it was obvious that Shisui was wrong. His father was a person of honor who took care of his clan, there was nothing wrong with that.

"I understand, father," he replied with equal solemnity and looked at him with admiration. His father was incredible.

He bowed ready to leave, he had nothing more to ask him. But when he got to the door he heard Fugaku calling him back.

"And have you already found your way?"

Sasuke immediately thought of his face sculpted on the Hokage mountain, but then the image was replaced by another. He thought of a blond child who once wore tattered clothes is now wearing Konoha's uniform.

He clenched his fists.

"Yes, I have a goal," he guaranteed he determined.

His firm tone made Fugaku smile smugly, and he nodded respectfully.

"Always keep this in mind and never hesitate. As long as your heart is firm in your choice, the road will be the right one".

Sasuke found himself smiling, his stomach warm in front of the approval of the parent he admired so much. Now more than ever he felt determined to achieve his goal.

He would bring Naruto home and only once he did he would become Hokage.

## Hurt ravens

*Itachi felt someone pull off his elastic with a quick and spiteful gesture. Instantly, the hair that he had managed to keep composed away from his face slid forward over his cheeks and shoulders, a few wisps covering his eyes as well.*

*He sighed in exasperation.*

*"Shisui ..." he called to order, but the cousin had already started running his fingers through his hair.*

*"Loose are so beautiful" he justified himself, he felt the shape of his smile as he kissed the back of his neck.*

*"To keep them loose I would have to shorten them" he teased him and the reaction was immediate.*

*He adjusted himself as best he could to the strong arms that held him against a solid chest.*

*"Don't you dare," Shisui growled. "Your hair is gorgeous."*

*Itachi barely held back a laugh thinking about the pout he must have put on the other.*

*"Please tidy them up."*

*He didn't have to insist too much, with an annoyed mutter Shisui did as he told him. He took back the elastic and began to comb them, still enclosing them in the low ponytail.*

*"I have to go," he said then. "Kakashi-taichu awaits me".*

*"I know," Shisui sighed.*

*Itachi stood up, in the half-light the trees barely filtered the moonlight on the clearing and Itachi's outlines blurred into the night like an almost ethereal figure. The moon, however, illuminated his skin, his hair in ink and the plates of the ANBU armor. He was beautiful, a vision. Shisui wished he would stay there to kiss him all night, talk and caress the bare skin of his shoulders with his fingertips, not daring to wish for anything else, but they couldn't ... They were shinobi, they had more important missions and Itachi had to leave.*

*He took his hand, kissing his fingers. Shisui was almost fifteen, Itachi twelve, was their first love for both. They felt as if they were invincible together, inseparable even across distance.*

*"You know, we're destined," Shisui muttered.*

*"Still with this story ..."*

*"That's true," he protested with a smile. "Our indexes are tied together by the red thread of destiny! This is why I will never leave you".*

*"It's just a fairy tale, don't be stupid." But beyond Itachi's attempts to be more serious, he couldn't melt a smile at his cousin's exaggerated statements.*

*"That's not true, I can see the red thread. It's one of the secret abilities of the Mangekyo," he assured with a bright smile.*

*Itachi could not resist any longer and bent to give him a small chaste kiss on the lips. he could feel the shape of the other's smile.*

*"Then I just have to trust you" he considered. "Now I really have to go ..."*

*"Come back quickly and safely".*

*The boy smiled sweetly. "Obviously".*

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The sign that read The Hare and the Tortoise was nailed lopsided on the facade of the old inn at the crossroads of Land of Fire and Land of Grass. When during the end of the Second Ninja War the owner had founded that inn, he had earnestly assured that it was the exact point where the hare from the famous legend had fallen asleep, the point where the tortoise had managed to pass it.

Now it was just a shack that was held together by a miracle, with the sloping roof rebuilt several times and the wood consumed by moths. It was so eerie and filthy that it was rarely used by passing ninjas, it was a forgettable hostel. Itachi was probably the only one from Konoha who had ever been there, along with Shisui, and even then they had been driven by despair. It was pouring rain that night and Shisui had been very badly injured, they could not continue and that was simply the nearest inn.

It was also where an eleven-year-old Itachi dared to kiss Shisui for the first time. It had been a very brief contact of closed lips, like children in love, of which he retained only the iron taste of blood.

Itachi rolled his eyes, looking at the line of the sun. It was less than three minutes until noon, he was on time. In his hidden spot in the trees, he took off his mask and hid his ANBU uniform with anonymous civilian clothes, also transforming his face so as not to be recognized. However, he made his henge very weak so that a sharingan could see through it.

Without hesitation, he entered the tavern. Inside him there was little light and so much dust that it made him wrinkle his nose. The nauseating smell of sweat, beer and spoiled food tightened his throat. Compared to many other inns he had been undercover at, this one was little frequented. Small groups had turned suspicious as he entered, but his henge had soothed them enough to make everyone go back to their own business. There was a group playing cards, the beer spilled on the table. In one corner another was arguing furtively, sometimes

leaving suspicious looks around. Mostly they were loners who went there to get drunk. The bartender cleaned the encrusted counter with a filthy rag, his hairy chest exposed from the open shirt. They were all unclear shadows in the low light.

*Not very hygienic*, he thought, looking at the insects buzzing from table to table, settling on plates with food scraps.

Suddenly he felt a presence behind him, appeared out of nowhere, but he was unable to react in time. A hand gripped him firmly at his bare side and a breath collided with his right ear.

"First floor. Last room on the far left "Shisui breathed before disappearing as he appeared.

Itachi let out the breath he didn't realize he was holding. Without moving he looked around, no one seemed to have noticed that very brief exchange. And no one stopped him, not even the bartender, when he moved towards the stairs and started up them. No one paid him attention, as if he were perfectly forgettable, and he went up the ramp to the first floor. He reached the door Shisui indicated, finding it ajar.

He took a deep breath, quenching the nervousness. This time he would go all the way, even at the cost of fighting. Shisui was dangerous, he had attacked Sasuke, Kakashi and was certainly the real client of the theft of the Scroll. He had crossed the line, proving to be a threat to Konoha. He couldn't hesitate.

He then reached out and opened the door with a firm push, muscles tense in case he had to fight.

The room consistently mirrored the rest of the diner: a dirty floor, moth-damaged furniture, a musty smell, a crumbling four-poster bed, and broken window glass. And he was in the center of the room.

Shisui.

"Shisui," he muttered breathlessly.

It had been more than a year since the last time they had met in secret and her curls had become wilder. Shisui's entire expression was wilder, like an animal escaped from captivity.

Itachi did not change expression when he heard the door close behind him, he kept his eyes fixed in front of him to study every move of the man in front of him.

As soon as the door was sealed, the only remaining eye narrowed, softening Shisui's entire expression.

"Itachi," he returned in a low, happy tone.

That tone was enough to make him tremble, to shake his determination at least in part. Itachi had to close his eyes and regulate his heartbeat, hating himself for the sudden emotion that twisted his bowels.

This time it couldn't go like any other, he remembered. He would not let him go after taking advantage of that stolen time: he had to capture him.

But Shisui didn't have to understand this, he didn't have to suspect anything, so it was better that at least at the beginning he behaved as usual.

"Isn't this place too risky?" he asked.

Shisui smiled carelessly.

"If you haven't been a spy, no one will come. And my crows are inspecting the perimeter, " he guaranteed.

He nodded, looking reassured. Moreover, if someone in Konoha had discovered that he was meeting clandestinely with a nukenin, he would have labeled him as a traitor. The only one who knew about those meetings was Danzo, since it was the old counselor who pushed him to look for Shisui and ... let himself go. Itachi was not sure what Danzo hoped to achieve from all this, as Shisui was always careful not to reveal anything about his new life. But he also knew that Danzo never did anything by chance, there was always a reason and Itachi trusted this.

He dropped the transformation, thus showing his true likeness. As soon as he did, Shisui's eye shone and his cousin started walking towards him.

"Your hair has gotten even longer," he considered him with a smile.

"Yours are more curly too," he replied.

Itachi didn't move when Shisui was practically in front of him, one hand reaching behind his neck, clutching the ponytail of straight hair. Before he realized it, he had taken off the elastic and released the shiny threads, which spread around his figure. Shisui's fingers caressed the long free locks, there was a reverence in the gestures that made Itachi immobilize. The next second he was kissing him, his lips pressed against his with disarming despair. The hand that had so tenderly caressed his hair came down to wrap around his waist, clinging to his hips with such force that it made Itachi's mouth open. Shisui immediately took advantage of that opening, made the kiss more intense and wet, sticking his tongue in search of the twin. Itachi shivered at the sensation of the moist muscle filling his mouth, licking his lips and teeth. The sensation accompanied by the smell of Shisui, which he hadn't felt for so long - too long -, made him harden instantly.

He opened his eyes again, trying to put his firmness back together. He had to do it now, before the excitement took possession of his mind and crumbled the resolution that had brought him here. Also Shisui at that moment seemed totally unarmed, at the mercy of the kiss. He was vulnerable, he couldn't hope for a better time.

He waited just a few minutes, returning the kiss and the gestures so as not to make him suspicious. In fact, he basked in the sensation, taking every moment as his last breath. But he knew that the moment was over when Shisui moved his hands from his hips to her chest, sliding from his collarbones to undo the buttons of the blouse he was wearing. This was the right time.

He bit his lip hard and then slowly moved away from the other's face, his eyes glazed. Shisui didn't run after him, he was paralyzed and looked down at his suddenly handcuffed wrists. On his chain were imprinted symbols of seals, placed to block the chakra. He seemed confused to see them.

Itachi leaned against the wall wearily.

"Let's finish it here, Shisui," he asked.

On hearing his name, the nukenin looked up from the handcuffs blocking him and looked into his face. He smiled, but that stretch of lips was just a pale imitation of Shisui's real old smile. There was nothing playful about him and his eyes shone with a manic light, which he could have acquired only after years in the midst of the shinobi scum. It gave Itachi chills.

"Oh, do you want to do it like this?" he asked in a tone of voice that was as dirty as his gaze, his smile.

But that made Itachi tremble.

He tried his breath to reply, to stop him, while Shisui came back close, his lips this time on his neck. Itachi was ashamed to offer him that vital, fragile point so spontaneously, it would take so little to kill him. He put his hands on his shoulders and pushed hard.

"Shisui, don't resist. I'm taking you back to the Leaf," he said firmly, despite his heart trembling.

His cousin mocked him and, demonstrating how seriously he was taking him, grabbed him by the hips and dropped him onto the nearby bed. The mattress cushioned the fall on his back, but Itachi gritted his teeth at Shisui's weight on him.

"Sure," he coaxed him, his hands wandering to slip under his civilian clothes. "Just like all the other times".

Itachi frowned. "No, this time for real."

He snorted. "And what would change from the other times?"

"You hurt Sasuke."

Shisui froze. His hands stopped and he raised his eyes to meet those of the other, the same black irises reflecting on each other.

"He got in the way," he said, his tone much more serious than a second before.

"Would you hurt me too if I got in the way?"

The silence lasted a long time as they stared at each other, their faces still so close that their breaths mingled. Shisui's one eye grew colder as time passed. Then his figure fell apart: it became a black spot that divided into many small ravens with shiny black feathers. Itachi recognized the technique they had invented together and, free from the weight that held him on his back, sat up on the bed. He looked around, waiting for Shisui to appear again.

He gasped as his voice reached him right behind him.

"It depends," he said. "Are you going to catch Naruto?"

He turned to find Shisui lying on the other side of the bed, his arms raised limply behind his head. He didn't have the handcuffs with the seals, the one from before must have been a clone and Itachi cursed himself for falling into it so easily. Shisui's only eye was on the dirty ceiling.

That question put him to attention.

"He is the jinchūriki of the Kyūbi, it is my duty as a shinobi of the Leaf to bring him home".

He made a face, his eye shifted to look at him with contempt. That look hurt him.

"You call home a prison where everyone hates you and keeps you at a distance, just waiting for the right moment to use you as a weapon?"

Itachi wrinkled his nose in annoyance, those words that in spite of him sank into his mind. But he felt the blow and replied:

"I didn't know his condition was so close to your heart."

Shisui pursed his lips, the expression that became much more bitter.

"No, I ignored him like everyone else," he admitted. "I figured it out later".

He crawled slowly on the mattress, getting closer to the reclining figure, still leaving some space between them.

"When you kidnapped him," he said.

"I didn't kidnap him".

He rolled his eyes. "Okay, then when he followed you to leave Konoha."

He laughed openly. "No, it's *not me* he followed."

That emphasis put chills in his arms, but his mind worked very fast. He knew by heart the reports of Shisui's disappearance, his betrayal. Itachi himself was there when, to escape from him and the other ANBUs, Shisui threw himself into the Naka River and disappeared in the middle of the jump, as if the air had swallowed him into thin air. Everyone thought he had



been a particularly successful shunshin, but at that moment Itachi was reminded of what the Inuzuka patrols had described. That evening there was not only the smell of Shisui and Naruto at the gates of Konoha, there was a third one: a stranger, who smelled of conifers, ash ... but who seemed almost synthetic.

A third man, an accomplice.

Itachi's eyes narrowed, aware that it was the person who had saved Shisui from his suicidal leap, the person who had an interest in abducting the jinchūriki.

"Who?" he asked hard, unyielding.

Shisui grinned, a creepy cat with his only bright eye. He sat up as a hoarse laugh crept out of his throat, with his gesture erasing all the little distance Itachi had attempted to put between them. He faced him face to face, their noses brushing.

The mad expression scared him, he prepared to fight.

"Itachi..." he murmured, "do you still remember our dream? Your dream? Becoming the strongest shinobi capable of deciding war and peace? "

Itachi nodded with a thoughtful nod. That was still his dream, his goal and - although Shisui was the only one who knew it thoroughly - he was finally getting really close to fulfilling it. But the crazy, hasty and slightly exalted tone with which he had spoken alarmed him. His muscles tensed automatically, as if he were close to a fight.

"I remember," he replied, keeping his voice quiet.

Shisui's smile got even crazier.

"What if I told you that there are already people like that? Shinobi with so much power to be gods, capable of being able to have complete management of the war ".

Itachi became even more upset, he was sure he wasn't referring to the Kage of the Five Ninja Nations.

"I would doubt their existence, otherwise they would already be doing it," he said placidly.

"The project is still under development".

"And this project consists in stealing the Jinchūriki from the villages?"

Shisui rolled his eyes, visibly exasperated.

"Don't steal, they're not things you can steal," he growled. "Naruto came with us because he wanted it."

"You manipulated a child," he insisted.

"No, we told him the truth and he chose."

This confirmed Kakashi's report, where he presented the child aware of his situation ... And it was someone who revealed it to him and only someone inside Konoha could have done it. But not Shisui, as he admitted he was interested in the Jinchūriki after his escape. Who else had betrayed the village like that? He darkened his gaze, more and more troubled by what he was discovering.

"You, who?"

Shisui smiled disturbingly again. "A new dawn for the world".

"Who are these gods you named?" he insisted.

"The monsters that the villages have created".

The cryptic answers gave him nerves, he shook his hands on the fabric of the bed to resist the urge to attack him and drag him home by force. Fighting with Shisui was not easy, more than once he had been defeated by his cousin, he had to play out and think, stay lucid. He had to have as much information as possible.

"Is it to control those monsters that you stole the Forbidden Scroll?"

The older man's face became indifferent. "I don't know what you're talking about. I have not stolen anything".

"No, you don't. But Mizuki on your behalf yes".

Shisui kept his expression for many seconds, looking at him almost without blinking, but Itachi did not give up and did not look away. He knew it was his doing and he also knew why he did it, he just needed confirmation.

And that came, when Shisui finally turned his face and grinned. "Caught".

Perhaps in his heart he had hoped he would continue to deny, because that admission weighed down his heart and blocked his throat. Shisui had abandoned Konoha, but in those four years he had never done anything against the village ... that stance marked him as unsavable, no one on the Council would forgive him anymore.

"You want to free the Kyūbi ..." he murmured incredulously.

"No!" he strongly contradicted. "We just want to give Naruto the power he needs to defend himself."

"That scroll contains the seal that the Yondaime imposed on him. You want to understand how to take it off".

"Improve it," he corrected, gritting his teeth.

Itachi was getting sick. The Bijū guaranteed balance between nations, they were a warning that discouraged villages from attacking each other directly. Up until that point, Konoha had done a good job of hiding that they had lost their own, but if they really wanted Naruto to

start using the Kyūbi's power soon the rumors would go out ... Konoha would be attacked, deprived as they were of their eldest defensive weapon.

"Why?" he asked with difficulty.

"Because I want peace, Tachi. That's what you want too, it was your dream".

"The only possible peace is with Konoha".

Shisui scoffed at his belief. A shrill, clumsy sound that made his skin crawl. It had already happened that in their clandestine meetings they talked to each other, of course, but usually Shisui had evaded every question of him, responding with teasing and changing the subject. It was the first time they *really* talked to each other and it was terrible what he was coming to find out.

"Konoha is corrupt, like all villages. There can never be true peace with this shinobi system".

"Make the same speeches that Madara did in his time," he protested, wanting to remind him of what had happened to the old clan leader, but she stopped seeing Shisui's gaze light up.

"Maybe it was he who opened my eyes."

Itachi stood with his mouth ajar, as if seized by a realization he wasn't sure he had fully understood. His reach would have been too vast and Madara had been killed by the Shodaime. No, Shisui's words must have been deceptive on purpose to confuse him. He tried to recover, the analytical mind swiftly trying to draw conclusions and results.

A Madara fan, perhaps? Another Uchiha? There were no traitors Uchiha besides Shisui, they just didn't exist.

He took a long sigh from his nose. "And how did he open them to you?"

"He showed me the rot of Konoha. What I already knew existed, but which I ignored. The same one that you are ignoring now".

"And when did this happen? Since when did you plan to betray me?" he asked him, trying to shift his attention to a more personal level to make him talk.

Itachi wanted to achieve more, he was beginning to be exasperated by these half answers. Even though he was getting information, Shisui was still adept at hiding who was behind the group he joined. He couldn't go on just by guessing, he had to make him take a wrong step.

"I decided to leave the day I left," he replied softening his tone. "The thought had never crossed my mind before. You know that I love you, that I hate being away from you".

Itachi bit his cheek, being hurt by that confession despite his sweetness.

"But you are gone. Who convinced you to do it?"

"You know who: Dance! He forced me! " he blurted out.

He overlooked that accusation, knowing all too well the resentment he felt towards the old councilor since it was he who thwarted his plan against the village.

"But you knew who to go with when you ran away," he insisted. He hardened his gaze. "Someone else must have put the idea in your head, the same one that now has you and Naruto."

Shisui smiled. "Just a good guy, an old friend. We see things from the same perspective "he laughed, beating on the blindfold that hid his missing eye, as if to make a joke.

"And who is he?"

"Nobody". He widened his smile. "That's how he would answer you."

"And how would you answer me?"

"That it is better for you not to poke your nose, it's none of your business."

Something inside him roared at that abrupt sentence. He closed his eyes to control himself and struggled to keep his voice steady.

"It's my business, since he took you away from me."

Shisui took his hand. He winced and looked back at him, his cousin's eye was sweet and full of desire.

"Come with me, then," he murmured and for a moment he felt like he was pleading.

Itachi felt the urge to tear off his hand, but remained in his gentle grip. Shisui intertwined their fingers, stroking the back, raised tendons and calluses in the meantime.

"Come with me," he repeated. "Let's leave all this, together we two shouldn't fear anything".

Itachi frowned. "I cannot".

He expected that reaction, but the inflammation of the red eye was still violent and his response was harsh in his ears.

"Why not?!"

"Sasuke" he muttered without adding anything else.

The answer seemed to calm Shisui. He always knew how important his little brother was to him, that he would always come before anything. Perhaps knowing it was more for it than for loyalty to Konoha was almost reassuring. Some things never changed.

"He could come too," he proposed and there was really a hopeful note in his voice. "He would keep Naruto company."

He shook his head. "No, Shisui. No. I will never go with you ".

He let go of his hand and Itachi felt a strange feeling of emptiness, the same emptiness that he now saw in Shisui's gaze. But they had to be realistic, Itachi was a Konoha shinobi and he would never betray it.

And he had a mission.

"Who are your allies, Shisui?" he asked him bluntly.

The question sounded too quiet in the silence created, but Shisui reacted abruptly. He got out of bed and started walking around the room, gesturing with one arm.

"Go to hell. I have already told you: monsters that you have created, just like me ".

"Nukenin, then".

It wasn't a real surprise, but that word seemed to infuriate the other. He almost had the feeling that in anger the curls were swelling even more.

"Convenient to call us that. But we are only weapons that you have thrown away once broken! "

Itachi in turn felt the anger rise in his throat, the frustration and indignation flow through the veins and the chakra paths. For that accusation he struggled to refrain from not showing the sharingan.

"No, we didn't throw you away," he said and caught the grudge in his voice too late, but he didn't stop. "It is you who have abandoned us!".

"I had no choice, you were hunting me! Danzo got my eye out! " he barked at the empty orbit hidden by the blindfold.

"Because you attacked him".

"I didn't do it," he shouted, his hand clinging to his face as if to hide the scarred side of him. "I was trying to work things out, but Danzo wanted me to get his way."

"You wanted to put him under genjutsu with Amatsukami," he reminded him angrily that he continued to deny his guilt.

"No, your father would have been the one to end up under genjutsu!"

He looked at him in disbelief. "And how is that supposed to make me feel better ?!"

"Did you prefer Danzo's solution? He wanted to exterminate the clan! "

"No," he contradicted him in a broken voice. "He prevented the massacre from happening, he saved the clan and the village".

Shisui stopped and looked at him. His sharingan still glowed, with the tomoe spinning so fast they looked mad. Finally he stretched his lips into a wry smile.

"Are you joking. That old man hates us".

He shook his head. "No, he was just worried about the village. But he found the solution.

The older boy's skeptical and contemptuous expression showed how little he believed it, so Itachi took a breath and told him before he could cut him off. But as he spoke, Shisui's reaction to the solution found was one of obvious disgust. He turned pale and widened his eye, looking at him in disbelief, the cold imprinted on his half-open mouth; the shock was such that he looked at him in silence even when he finished.

"You... are you kidding," he finally said, his tone frozen. "You didn't accept, you didn't ..."

"I did it," he said, despite himself hurt by that attitude.

He did not expect to see Shisui consume the space he had placed between them and return to the bed, so quickly that he believed he had used a shunshin. He took his hands, almost tugging at him.

"No!" he said and was desperate. "Itachi, what have you done? Why did you accept? "

"Because it was the only solution. We stopped the coup without a drop of blood "he said, then added with a sad smile. "In the end, even in the past, problems were solved like this, right?"

"Why, Tachi?" Shisui repeated as if she hadn't heard him. "Why you?"

"I am the son of the chieftain," he replied placidly. "Me, or Sasuke. Better me".

He shook his head, as if trying to push that thought away.

"No, Aunt Mikoto could not have accepted ... you are her son!"

"That is fine". The calm tone was a stark contrast to the desperate protests. "The sacrifice of someone in the shadows to save many. Is that what it means to be shinobi, isn't that what you believed in? "

The ferocity returned to Shisui's face, he squeezed his hands tightly until it hurt.

"The shinobi world is sick," he growled. "I believe in this now, that the only way to fix it is to destroy it. So scum like Danzo will cease to exist. Don't you realize he just wants to use you ?! "

"Okay," he proclaimed. "I will do what I have to to save the village and the clan."

"Also fight me?" he challenged him.

They stared at each other in a tense and heavy silence. Itachi had the answer on the tip of his tongue, after all he had come this far with a specific goal and it was before that he had tried to

make him understand his intention. Shisui hadn't taken it seriously, but now he was doing it and saying it would have mattered much more. He would mark a line and he already felt it as it was destroying his heart.

"Yes".

Shisui let go of his hands and looked away. He expected him to say more, instead he remained silent to show him the profile. Looking at him Itachi felt sick, his eyes drank every feature with greed, aware that there would be no more encounters. He had just drawn a line.

A line he should have made a long time ago. Perhaps it would have hurt less, he felt himself bleeding deep inside.

Yet despite his pain he was surprised to see Shisui curl his lips and then burst out laughing. Cold, insane, and frightening, he stiffened the hairs on Itachi's neck. He felt the chakra boiling in the other, his strength vibrating under the skin, frightening and powerful. He was about to attack, but the now desperate laughter destabilized him enough that he was unable to react in time. Shisui's next words only froze him even more.

"Okay, yes ... I've always known that, after all". He lifted his face and Itachi held his breath as he saw the trail of tears on the cheek of his good eye. "You weren't here for me. You always just wanted to meet me for information, use me. Maybe kill me? "

He looked at him in shock. "Shisui ..."

"Did you lie to me when you said you loved me?"

Itachi's eyes widened. "No!" he protested. "I love you!"

He didn't know what he expected when he said it, maybe he should have just lied ... Shisui didn't change his expression, he looked at him more and more desperate and resigned.

"I understand, so that's what's stopping you. That's why you never managed to kill me ”.

Despair was beginning to stain Itachi too. He wanted to shout at him that he was misunderstanding, never once had Danzō ordered him to assassinate Shisui, his job was only to keep track of his movements and objectives.

"I would never kill you," he escaped.

He gasped as he felt a hand brush his cheek. He had remained so fixed on Shisui's face that he lost his hand movements.

"This is a problem for the best shinobi in Konoha ..." Shisui considered, the soft voice. "Let's make up for it".

Itachi's eyes widened, realizing why he was finally calling out so much chakra. The tomoe continued to rotate in the vermilion iris until they showed a geometric figure.

"Shisui, no ...!" he pleaded with him.

“Amatsukami”.



## Take care of him

*Of all the places he could hide, Madara... Tobi... Obito (who was he? Why didn't he know anymore?) didn't understand why he had chosen the stone sculpture of the Fourth Hokage that overlooked Konoha. A mourning celebration crossed the main street of the village, towards the cemetery. It was October 10, the day of the attack, the death of the Fourth Hokage. From there the Village seemed so small and weak, oblivious to the threat that lay upon him once again.*

*But was Obito really a threat at this point? What was the use of attacking this world, taking lives and shedding blood? There was no ransom, no paradise that he could achieve.*

*Zetsu had lied to him.*

*The tables were tampered with, someone had rewritten the ancient teachings above, inventing a fable for fools. Fools like Madara, who believed in the impossible: peace does not exist, it cannot even be created with an illusion. He still did not understand how the old and powerful Uchiha had not noticed the trap, for Obito it was enough to observe them with the Mangekyo to see that underneath the underlying there was another meaning. It was good that Minato had taught him that lesson, perhaps that was why - of all places - he had gone to hide in what remained of the ex-sensei.*

*A movement behind him made him understand that he was not the only one who chose to hide there.*

*Lightning bolt grabbed a shuriken and threw it behind him. The weapon stuck on the ground, at the feet of a child, who fell backwards from the fright and sobbed.*

*"I didn't do anything, it's not my fault!" he screamed with tears in his eyes. "So leave me alone, dattebayo!"*

*Obito blinked, unsure of how to act for the first time in what seemed like an eternity. He knew that baby, he had held him in his arms at the exact moment he was born, even before his parents. As the silence lengthened he noticed the bruises on his small face, the wounds were already starting to heal but were still red on the skin, a sign that he had been beaten recently.*

*"Who did it?"*

*He stopped hearing the sound of his own voice as he was surprised at how rough and hoarse he came out, as if his throat was consumed.*

*The child, Naruto, if he remembered the stupid name Sensei had given his son, studied him as if he were a potential threat.*

*"What do you care about?"*

*"Who?" he persisted and didn't even understand why it was so important. He only noticed that his anger was growing, boiling in his veins, and he didn't even bother to suppress it. He felt the urge to set Konoha on fire once more.*

*"Nobody, alright!" Naruto snapped defensively.*

*"Tell me who did it."*

*"The senpai at the Academy!" he suddenly screamed, but the anger lasted only a second. His shoulders hunched in defeat and he looked down, tears falling from his eyes. "Are you happy now, dattebayo?!"*

*He didn't answer, shaken by the answer he already knew. He sat on the stone head, the apparent calm hiding a raging storm filled with hatred within him.*

*He did not understand this world, he would never understand it.*

*How could they celebrate the day of the Yondaime's death by beating his legacy? Naruto was just a child and yet they had raised their hands against him.*

*This was the world's mistake, what he should have corrected with the Tsuki no Me plan.*

*If only Zetsu hadn't lied to him all that time.*

*He noticed that Naruto had dried his tears and was now looking at him curiously. That was his eighth birthday, yet he looked so small and skeletal, much smaller than his real age.*

*"Why are you wearing a mask?" he asked him stepping forward.*

*Obito did not answer.*

*"You appeared suddenly, how did you do it? Are you a shinobi? "*

*He shrugged.*

*He spread a toothless smile. "I'll become a ninja too. I'll even become Hokage, believe it!"*

*He winced to hear his own old dream and it was so easy for him to understand why he was saying it. If he had become Hokage everyone would have noticed him, they would have admired him and not beaten him.*

*"I'll be the best Hokage" he continued, lighting up more and more, like a small sun. "I will be so better that everyone will admire me! And the kids on the playground will want to be with me! And no one will say I'm a monster! And the old grocery store won't yell at me and I'll buy from the shops and ... "*

*"Can't you buy from the shops?" he cut him off. His voice was calm, detached.*

*Naruto took a step back and looked away, squirming a little in discomfort.*

*"No, they kick me out," he explained.*

*"Not even to eat?"*

*He nodded. "But Ichiraku-san always gives me ramen, I love ramen, his ramen is the best in the world, it's the best, every time ..."*

*He was no longer listening to him, the anger had returned as overwhelming as a tsunami, he felt himself burn to ashes from it. The hatred for this silly village, for that whole system ... seemed destined to never end. All he wanted to do was destroy.*

*"Hey, you didn't tell me your name!"*

*He looked back at the child. "I don't have a name," he replied.*

*"It's impossible, dattebayo, anyone has a name!" he was indignant.*

*"No, I have no name, because I am no longer anyone".*

*He wasn't even Madara anymore, not after what he had discovered, not after realizing that this dream was just the delirium of a manipulated old madman. He had lost all purpose by now.*

*Naruto touched him, clung to his arm and squeezed so hard that he winced. Suddenly in a panic he shrugged it off and stood up, put space between them.*

*"What are you doing?!"*

*"I touched you," he replied as serious as only a child can be. "If I touched you it means that you are here, you are someone, you cannot be nobody. So you have to have a name! "*

*He could not manage or decipher the sudden surge of emotions, he was so unaccustomed to something like this that he got agitated. He took a step back as Naruto continued stubbornly:*

*"Besides, only ghosts are nobody and you can't be a ghost because ghosts scare me and instead you don't scare me!"*

*You should be.*

*"And ... And ..." this time he seemed to hesitate, embarrassed, but he clenched his fists. "And you were kind to me, you listened to me and therefore you are nobody but you are someone because you are my friend!"*

*A twitch in his chest made him gasp. He widened his eye in realizing that it was his heart.*

*Friend.*

*The last person who had said it to him was Rin.*

*He tried the instinct to reach out and touch him in turn, but he couldn't, he felt breathless in his lungs. He took a step back, shaken by it all.*

*"I ... I am ..." he felt his throat tight, his heart beating painfully after all that time of emptiness. "Obito".*

*His name seemed foreign to his mouth after so long not saying it, forgetting it. But Naruto smiled.*

*"I am Uzumaki Naruto!" he yelled. "Future Hokage, dattebayo!"*

*He could not answer anything, not even smile, the tightening of his chest was more and more suffocating.*

*"I have to go. Do not tell anyone. Don't tell anyone you saw me. I will come back. You... don't tell anyone".*

*Naruto looked at him curiously. "It's a secret?"*

*"Yes, a secret," he assured him. "I..."*

*"You will come back" the child completed for him, more and more happy. "Okay, I'll keep the dattebayo secret!"*

*He disappeared in kamui with the impression of that last blinding smile.*

**\*\***

Naruto peered carefully into the room. No one could be seen, it was completely empty. Instead, he saw a large parchment on a table. It had to be the one he and Shisui had to retrieve, the one that contained the information on his seal.

Sure he was alone, he slipped into the room and closed the door behind him.

***Brat, you're going to get in big trouble,*** muttered a hollow voice in his head.

He didn't flinch, recognizing the Kyūbi who, as usual, was giving unsolicited advice.

"They won't catch me, dattebayo," he assured him. "I was careful".

He grabbed the parchment, starting to unroll it from the start. He had a plan and the whole intention of putting it into practice. The reason why Obito and the others were so reluctant to let him go around was his weakness, he didn't know incredible shinobi techniques like them and even in the last fight ... he was overwhelmed so easily! But things were not going to stay

that way. He would learn some crazy techniques, so incredible that Obito would have to recognize that he was now a shinobi through and through and he no longer needed their protection. Indeed, he could be protecting them, they would fight together.

But all good intentions evaporated when he saw the first technique marked on the parchment.

"Bunshin ?!" he blurted out, putting his hands in his hair. "Why exactly the technique in which I am most denied ?!"

***You're denied because you don't have an iota of control over your chakra, brat,*** muttered the fox, always very supportive.

"I have no chakra control because of you!" he replied angrily.

***Umpf, all my other Jinchūriki before you haven't had this problem.***

"Because they had teachers who knew how to train a Jinchūriki!"

He loved the Akatsuki guys, but it was obvious that no one knew which way to turn with him and the kyūbi chakra (after all that was why they had stolen the Forbidden Scroll) and he was very sure that Hidan's strategy of chasing him with his scythe urging him to survive were not *real* training.

From the Kyūbi there was a long silence, in which Naruto looked despondent at the parchment. Maybe he could move on to the next technique?

***Wait, this is Kage Bunshin,*** he objected the fox.

"So what?"

***And so, brat, maybe we can come up with something good ...***

\*\*

Itachi snapped his eyes open. Before he could fully realize his whereabouts he had pulled out a kunai and his sharingan shone as he scanned the room.

He was still in the inn and he was alone.

He sighed, disheartened. He must have fallen asleep while he was waiting for Shisui - what a beginner's mistake - but judging by the sunlight coming in through the window, it must have been hours since the meeting. He wasn't late, as he had thought at first, he hadn't really come. Perhaps he had learned that someone had been spying, that Itachi had received a tip that it was for him to pass through that inn. Or perhaps the tip was false, the spy who had revealed it

to him was not very reliable. Why would Shisui have to go to that shack forgotten by the world? Until that moment even Itachi had never known its existence, he did not remember ever having passed in front of it or having heard of it.

It had been a hole in the water, Danzo would have been disappointed.

He did not understand why the old councilor had specifically given him the order to look for Shisui. True, Itachi was Konoha's best shinobi at the time, but the Village had better trackers - the Inuzuka, to begin with - who could better track the nukenin's tracks. After all, he had never really been linked to his cousin, he knew him by sight, but he did not have a bond that allowed him to understand how he reasoned and therefore anticipate his moves. They had never been friends, only distant relatives.

But he trusted Danzo. The old councilor always had his reasons and was rarely wrong in his judgment. He was cynical and sometimes cruel, but it had to be for a nation to survive. Certain sacrifices were inevitable, Itachi had had to learn this as a child.

He waited a few more minutes, just to be careful, but then he had to admit to himself that the tip was useless, he was just wasting time. He put his things back, then, retrieved the weapons he had scattered around to trap him and went downstairs. For the sake of scruple he also checked the faces of the patrons, even knowing that he would hardly find him there ... not to mention that he barely remembered his face, in mind he had only the portrait present in the bingo book. However, as he expected there was no one who even vaguely had Uchiha features, so he left the inn without anyone stopping him.

He crossed the street with a calm and relaxed appearance, when in fact all of his senses were on the alert for the slightest sign of danger. In reality, Shisui could have introduced himself, noticed his presence and decided to overturn the ambush. He knew it was not like that, otherwise he would have taken advantage of it when he fell asleep, but his prudence should never be abandoned.

Arriving at the side of the road, he jumped into the tree branches and moved to the woodpecker den where he had hidden his ANBU uniform. Everything was in order, nothing was missing, from the weapons to the Konoha sash. He sighed for the missed opportunity and put the various pieces of armor back on, ready to go home.

Just at that moment a rustle of feathers moved the air near his ear. With the tantō unsheathed, Itachi turned in alarm. It was just a crow ... or rather, it was one of his summons that he had placed to guard the perimeter. But there was something wrong ... his eyes reflected the red and black shape of his Mangekyo sharingan, he didn't remember having enchanted one with the tsukiyomi ...

He activated his sharingan, and the exact moment he did, the genjutsu surrounding him began to break apart.

Itachi remembered *everything*.

How things had *really* gone.

He pursed his lips, his eyes moist at the realization.

"Bastard ..." he whispered.

\*\*

Summer was getting hotter even for him, who had a synthetic body that usually protected him from temperature variations. The eternal humidity of Ame made any place in the refuge unlivable, no matter how much it was hidden inside. With his hands he brushed the low lawn and surveyed the trees around him. The clearing reproduced with its mokuton at least made the environment a little more comfortable, that was the right place to think. And he was thinking very darkly.

Obito was thinking about Shisui and the more he thought about it the more he found it a good idea to hit him with pine cones as soon as he saw him again. It had been a day and a half since they had split up and he had never been away for so long just to meet his sweet lover, he was beginning to be worried that he had fallen into a trap. If he had not returned within an hour at sunset, he would have gone to look for him himself. In case he didn't find Shisui, he had to assume that Konoha had captured him and then devise a way to retrieve him without exposing the Akatsuki too much.

*I hope you're okay just to throw those pinecones at your head, brat,* he thought.

Despite his deep thoughts - it was no small feat to design a way to infiltrate Konoha and retrieve a prisoner kept under maximum surveillance - he noticed the shadow attacking him. Beneath his mask his sharingan glowed and the kick went through his head as if he were intangible. The unsuccessful blow unbalanced his attacker and Obito took advantage of that moment to sprint away from his seat and enter a defensive position. He rolled on the grass, but before he could get up completely he found himself forced to resort to kamui again for another attacker.

How many are there? He wondered as he teleported to the edge of the tree-lined cavern where he shouldn't have looked over his shoulder.

In the enclosed space, some of them hidden among the trees he had created, there were numerous Narutos. He frowned, realizing that each copy had enough chakra to be the original, that they were indistinguishable from each other even for the sharingan. What was that news?

"Obito!" shouted one of the many Naruto.

It was the first who had attacked him, he was where a moment before he had sat cross-legged. His clothes were ruined, torn and dirty with earth; her hair much more disheveled than normal, her face red and sweaty. Despite his appearance he smiled fiercely, excited, his eyes sparkling with the desire to prove something. He brought the index and middle fingers of

both hands in front of his face, crossed vertically and horizontally, and screamed with all the breath he had in his throat.

"Let's fight! Kage bunshin no jutsu! "

With puffs of smoke and chakra around him, dozens of solid clones formed, quickly filling the mock clearing.

Obito smiled under the mask: kage bunshin, that clarified everything. Somehow he had managed to peek at the Forbidden Scroll and learn the first transcribed technique from the Nindaime.

He was impressed. Especially considering the amount of clones he had recalled in a short time, far more than an elite jonin would have summoned, and all had a decent amount of chakra to be useful in combat.

*Of course, kage bushin!* That was the solution to Naruto's chakra control problem, that was the perfect technique for him. Obito cursed himself for not getting there himself, he could have taught her a long time ago ...

It didn't matter, Naruto was there, loaded and confident. It was time to put him to the test.

"Come and get me," he challenged.

It was the same game of cat and mouse. Naruto was still a clumsy 12-year-old, with so much openness in his defense that Obito could have knocked him down from the first moment, no matter how many clones he kept summoning. His energy seemed infinite.

Precisely because of this, he kept pushing him to see how long he could resist, how much he could show before collapsing in exhaustion. Meanwhile he also took note of the various points to improve, for example it was absolutely necessary that he acquire greater coordination with and between the clones. The attack was very confused, without a real strategy; it could work with certain low-ranking opponents - there were so many clones - but an experienced shinobi could easily find a way to fight back and win despite the numbers.

Eventually he also blew up the last clone and knocked down Naruto, now too tired to resist his taijutsu. Obito crouched calmly, as if to observe his next move. Even though he was lying on the ground and vulnerable, the boy still didn't seem willing to give up. In fact, he jumped up trying to surprise him with a powerful head, but once again kamui activated and passed through him, ending up face down on the grass.

Obito smiled satisfied. "Good job".



Naruto looked at him shocked, frustrated. "But I didn't beat you," he complained as he sat down unhappily.

He snorted. "You're still a long way from beating me, sunshine," he coaxed him. "Before you can beat *me*, you have to outperform all other Akatsuki members."

The boy did not comment, it was no mystery that Obito was the most powerful in the group, even more powerful than Pain who controlled all Ame. He remained silent, discouraged, so the Uchiha spoke again.

"You've been good".

He looked up hopefully. "For real?"

"Kage Bushin is not a technique that everyone can perform," he explained. "It is one of the most difficult, especially the one you learned and involves the creation of a thousand clones. Senjū Tobirama invented it and there is a reason why it is found in the Forbidden Scroll: not all shinobi can support it".

"Yes, because you have to divide the chakra equally in each clone and not everyone has enough to do it. If they try, they can die of chakra exhaustion without realizing it. "

Obito looked at him in surprised silence for that timely and correct answer. Naruto stirred a little at the impassive gaze of the mask.

"Kurama told me ..." he explained.

"The Kyūbi" he corrected coldly, his entire pose hardened. "Do you keep talking to it? I told you to stop, it's dangerous".

"He's not dangerous" he pointed out, throwing him a dirty look. "We are friends, 'tebayo".

"He can't be your friend. It's a monster".

"And I'm his jailer!"

There was a little silence, Obito was amazed by that stance.

"Naruto, you are a victim," he reminded him softly. "It's not your fault".

"And it's not even the Kyūbi's fault if he's sealed inside me". He looked at him with his blue irises shining with determination, his weariness evaporating from this new battle. "We are both victims of the Yondaime," he concluded.

Obito felt all his objections die on his lips. He looked at the shadow of sadness in the blue gaze, visible despite the fire that always made it shine. The shadow came every time he thought of his father, Konoha, what they had done to him ... he remembered when he had told Naruto the truth, the whole truth, and how it had destroyed him. That was the moment when Obito had feared that he had broken him, that he had ruined that beautiful sun.

From the first meeting, he had often visited him in Konoha in secret, slipping into his apartment at night or going to the lonely places where he hid from others. It was that little Naruto who was always happy despite the pain who made him make the decision to face Zetsu and then Nagato, revealing everything to him. And then he had offered the child to leave Konoha with him, revealed everything the Sandaime was hiding from him, and let him take his choice. Naruto had suffered from the truth, but he had definitely learned something, as well as his loneliness and his pain had given him incredible empathy. He was only twelve, but at times he could see farther than many experienced ninjas with disarming simplicity. Like this time.

He snorted softly. "Sometimes I forget how wise you are."

The boy looked at him doubtfully, but when he saw him raise a hand to lift his mask he smiled happily. He hated it when Obito wore the mask, it was the signal that he was putting some distance between himself and the rest of the world, that he wasn't really himself and could be Madara (Konoha's fearsome and cruel enemy) or Tobi (a nuisance packaged on measure). Instead, when he took it off ...

He widened his smile as Obito opened his arms in a clear invitation. Without thinking twice, he threw himself against his chest, sitting comfortably between his crossed legs and letting himself be trapped in his embrace. He was a light weight and warm, now they were so used to that gesture that he quickly found his space. Obito sighed satisfied as he made a tree grow, at an unnaturally fast pace, just behind his back to be able to lean on and be more comfortable. Meanwhile Naruto clung with his hands to his shoulders, his fingers curled to claw the fabric - he always held it so tightly, as if he was afraid of being torn off - and his head resting on his neck, his blond hair tickling his chin.

Accepting Naruto into his life meant first getting used to physical contact again. He immediately realized that the child was touch starving, he was always looking for him and desperately; any slightest contact would make his eyes sparkle, even one that happened by mistake. In eight years of life, no one had ever shown a gesture of affection towards him, no hug, no caress, no squeeze. It was awful. This is why Obito had fought against the instinct that forced him to cover himself with clothes and masks, to put as much space as possible and barriers between himself and another human being. He had rediscovered his own reality, his own being a solid body, in order to give the child the affection he needed to grow.

And he had also stolen some pedagogical manuals on raising traumatized children from the libraries of all five ninja nations. Madara had taught him to be thorough in his planning.

For this, when the child was well settled he took off a glove and, with his free hand, stroked his cheek. This was something he had learned from books: skin contact with other skin free in the body the oxytocin, the hormone of happiness; if a child is deprived of it too consistently, it risks having very serious repercussions in adult life, such as depression and anxiety. Considering that Naruto had eight years of backlog, he never backed down. He had also threatened the Akatsuki members with death never to refuse any contact Naruto sought, with Sasori and Kakuzo he actually had to use some brute force, but in the end he was right.

Naruto tilted his face in favor of the caress and narrowed his eyes. The grip became more desperate and he trembled slightly.

"Aren't you ... angry?" he asked uncertainly.

He sighed, realizing his mistake, he shouldn't have left him alone that night.

"I'm never mad at you," he assured him. "I was worried, *I'm worried*. I don't want anything to happen to you".

The boy sniffed at him, rubbing his cheek against his hand.

"I know ... I'm sorry," he murmured. "I also endangered Shisui-nii ..."

"I'm sorry," he specified. "I shouldn't have reacted that way, I shouldn't have left you alone ... it's just that ..." he broke off, distraught.

But Naruto understood without him having to say more.

"Madara" completed for him.

"Madara," Obito confirmed with a sigh. "You scared me so much and I didn't know how to react, so he ... took over."

It wasn't that he really had a double personality - or triple, if Tobi was counted too - but certain reasoning, behavior and reaction were so ingrained in him that he often slipped into his prefabricated roles, into his masks, depending on what the situation required. So when he had to give a command to the Akatsuki he assumed the personality of Madara, or when he wanted to destabilize an enemy he became Tobi ... Sometimes it happened without realizing it, the masks took over and he forgot *he was Obito*. He hated it when it happened with Naruto.

Naruto who at that moment was looking at him smiling as if being abandoned in the dark for a whole night was the easiest thing to accept.

"Okay, I'm just glad you're not mad anymore."

"I've never been," he repeated. He stroked his hair, trying to get over some knot that harnessed the golden locks. "I'm really sorry I did it. I didn't have to get mad because you went to the festival. You're a kid, you should play with other kids, go to festivals without fear of shinobi hunting you..." he sighed, disgusted by their world.

"It will happen," he promised. "You will change things. You, Nagato-nii, Shisui-nii and all the others". His gaze lit up. "And I will help you, of course. You saw how good I have become, right? I can help you dattebayo!" he insisted.

He snorted amused by the momentum. He rubbed his palm across his forehead again, receiving a smug sound.

"We'll see," he replied without losing his balance.

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They didn't usually stay all that time in the same shelter without talking to each other, so in the short moment after the fight Naruto had used all his breath to recover the days of silence. Obito listened patiently, he didn't even comment when he talked to him about how the Kyūbi had helped him with the kage bunshin. What he had said before really struck him, as usual Naruto was able to make him see things from a new perspective ... Maybe he should try to be kinder to the chakra beast and not treat it... *him* as a simple weapon to control, exactly Konoha did. He no longer wanted to accept the logic of any village, so he imagined that his approach to the Bijū was also part of this.

Eventually Naruto fell asleep in the middle of a sentence, typical of him. He had infinite energy, a hyperactivity that put a strain on all Akatsuki members (except Deidara and Hidan, but he suspected that those two also had hyperactivity problems). Then suddenly he collapsed, as if his charge had run out. At times he was almost comical.

He was not surprised that he had collapsed like that, he had learned kage bunshin and had challenged him, even for a Uzumaki it was a lot to support. He gently lifted him, determined to take him to his room, to his bed where he would sleep better.

But he made it out of the tree-lined room just in time that he crossed paths with Kisame. He frowned to see him, he shouldn't have been in Ame, he had been sent to scout south for intelligence gathering. If he had returned, it was only because he had some big news.

"What happens?" he asked him, aware that he had crossed paths with him precisely because he was reaching him.

The shark man stared at him with his cold clear eyes, focusing on the little boy he was holding in his arms. He smiled and Obito hated the way he showed his pointed teeth.

"Madara ... Obito" corrected to see his face uncovered. "I was hoping to talk to you."

Obito regretted not having put the mask back on when leaving the room, he felt too exposed and at a disadvantage. He trusted Kisame with the same life as him, already at the beginning he had shown himself to him, but ... the desire to hide was too strong. When he was with Naruto, his defensive instincts become so strong that paranoia confused who was enemy or friend.

He took a deep breath, forcing himself to remain impassive.

"Later," he said. "We will talk about it with Pain and the others when Shisui is back."

Kisame flicked her tongue. "He is not here?"

"No," he confirmed as he passed him. "But he's about to come back."

The time to be in love was over, Tobi was going to throw some pine cones on his head.



# Madman

## Chapter Notes

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

*Obito felt a little drained, but in a pleasant way. His head was light, his chest warm and the lips beneath his mask remained folded in a slight smile. He wondered how a child could, with his spontaneity and innocence, make him feel so good. Was this how he would always feel, if he went back to Konoha, if he grew up alongside Naruto as he was his older brother?*

*He wondered, above all, how a child could generate such warmth in his arid heart when during the day that child endured so much pain, when others made him suffer abandonment and hatred. From the roof of the house he looked at Konoha and the anger mounted again. None of them deserved Naruto, they didn't even know what kind of treasure they had in their hands. He was their Jinchūriki, the reason why no other Village dared to attack them directly; he was the reason why the fox had not continued its destruction that night. Naruto protected them with just his existence and they spat in his face.*

*Unforgivable. They didn't deserve him.*

*Obito... instead he deserved him. After losing his he only light, after discovering Zetsu's deception, the illusion of Tsuki no Me ... after losing everything, he deserved at least some relief. He would make sure he deserved him. He would take him away with him, away from Konoha and those disgusting people. Naruto would certainly have agreed.*

*Really? He scoffed at a voice in his head, so shrill it reminded him of Zetsu's.*

*His eye fell on the Hokage mountain. That was Naruto's dream, the child loved Konoha against all logic, he considered it his home and would never leave it with pleasure. But what if he told him the truth that everyone is hiding from him? The reason why everyone hated and despised him, the secret that the Hokage kept from him, what his father had done to him from the earliest hours of his birth ... No, he would not have chosen Konoha yet.*

*Would he then choose the killer of his parents ?, The voice continued.*

*He swallowed, because the risk of being hated himself was real. But by now he had decided: he would tell him the truth, the whole truth and ... his bet was to hope that he would choose him, the happiness that he could offer him.*

*Yes, he would let the child decide. But first, then, he should have talked to Nagato about it; he too deserved to know the truth, as all that time he had been only Madara's puppet and, consequently, Zetsu's.*

*What happened next was a mystery.*

*He was ready to leave when a now familiar chakra signature caught his attention. Since Obito had met him in person, a part of him had become attuned to his presence, remaining*

*aware of where in Konoha he was. Shisui was at that time at the Naka temple. It was not the first time that, leaving Naruto's house late at night, he noticed his presence inside the sacred place. He was a bit curious about his continued presence in there, maybe ... did he hope to meet Madara again? He was sure it was not a trap, he would have noticed the other presence or the agitation, certainly even slipping around Konoha at night would have been more complicated.*

*He activated Kamui, determined to take that detour, and teleported directly to the temple, appearing from the floor as a ghost.*

*As he suspected, Shisui was alone, and he flinched as soon as his presence was evident. He was crouched on the tablets of the Uchiha, a lighted torch illuminated the words engraved in the rock. He had managed to pull out a kunai, but as soon as he identified it he relaxed.*

*He frowned, the boy was not afraid of him.*

*"You're back," he said surprised. "Hello, What-remains-of-the-will-of-Uchiha-Madara."*

*Under his mask his frown intensified, was he mocking him? He said nothing, watching him as he straightened up and gave him a serene smile. Shisui definitely wasn't afraid of him.*

*"Aren't you afraid of me anymore?" he asked aloud.*

*Shisui shook his head. "If you had wanted to hurt me, you would have done it the other time. You would have reduced Konoha to ashes long before ". He paused, hinting a cheeky smile. "You said it, you're not here to fight. Too bad, it would be interesting to measure myself against you ... "*

*He snorted, the boy was an idiot ... the kind of idiot he liked in spite of him, the one with the determination and the answer always ready. His attention shifted to the tablets. He changed the sharingan into Mangekyo and the engraved kanji changed in turn, taking shape in the description of the Tsuki no Me. He felt anger at seeing it and abruptly approached the ancient table. He ignored Shisui's flinch, touched the cold stone with his hand and let the chakra collide with the magic it contained. There was an initial void, as if there was nothing to be found, but the more he insisted the more resistance was created, as if the board itself was trying to dissuade him. Eventually he won and his chakra reverberated throughout the rock. When Obito withdrew his hand, under the kanji of the Tsuki no Me it was possible to see another older transcription, the one that was originally written there before Zetsu tampered with the stone.*

*Shisui beside him gasped, he too had activated the Mangekyo and could read everything.*

*"What have you done?" Shisui asked, fearing he'd ruined the table.*

*"I have revealed the deception" he said placidly.*

*He didn't read what was written, he knew it by heart. He deactivated the sharingan, without the magic eyes the table was the same as before, he did not suggest any tampering. The same*

*ancestral story was still seen, which the normal sharingan would reveal hiding Uchiha techniques, which in turn hid something.*

*He looked at Shisui, his young face frowning as he attempted to read the hidden truth. Finally the boy looked up and looked at him in surprise.*

*"So Tsuki no Me is actually the technique to awaken this Kaguya?"*

*Great summary, he just nodded. But the next comment surprised him.*

*"So it makes more sense. What madman would think he can solve the world's problems with an illusion? "*

*He almost laughed. Uchiha Madara, that's who. Uchiha Obito. Someone who had lost hope and would accept anything to give their life new meaning. Someone who did not accept that it was all useless, who could still see who he loved and was dead. That's what kind of madman.*

*He didn't answer, Shisui didn't expect him to. He seemed like a talker, because he quickly spoke again:*

*"But it gave me an idea ... I know what I can do to stop the coup." He turned to look at him, the expression of someone looking for advice. "I will use a genjutsu on Fugaku-sama, I will make him believe that he does not support the coup and his opposition will destabilize the Uchiha council."*

*He snorted. "You just said it's crazy to use an illusion to solve problems".*

*"I know, in fact it wouldn't solve it. But it would give us time to find a new solution. Instead of days, we could have other months... We would have more time ".*

*"Fugaku will break the genjutsu," he fatalistic said.*

*The current chieftain had earned his role not only by inheritance, but also by his ability in battle. There was a reason his enemies had nicknamed him Fierce Eye, his skill with the sharingan was evident. He would have easily broken a genjutsu.*

*"You can't break my Mangekyo's genjutsu," Shisui revealed. "I don't even need to look someone in the eye to charm them. Perhaps only another equally strong Mangekyo could counter it ... but I am the only Uchiha to have developed it, there is no danger of it happening. Nobody will notice ".*

*Obito was silent, thanks to Madara's teachings he immediately recognized that description.*

*"Kotoamatsukami," he said.*

*Shisui looked surprised to hear him say this. "How do you know?"*

*"You inherited it from your grandfather Kagami," he explained quietly. "He too developed the Mangekyo."*



*The boy's gaze lit up, even though his irises were still blood red, they glowed with affection.*

*"Yes, I read it in his diaries. It happened after... after Nidaime's death," he recalled dampening his enthusiasm in him. He lowered his chin, fixing his feet on the wooden floor. "It was written that afterwards, for the pain, he exterminated an entire opposing team ... which continued to rage on the lifeless bodies, until they were unrecognizable". He paused, staring blankly at nothing. "Is it true then? Do pain and Mangekyo make us insane? "*

*Before his eyes he had the light of lightning that cut through Rin's heart without hesitation, the smell of burnt flesh that made him wrinkle his nose, his ears hurt by the shrill and continuous chirping. And then the agonizing scream of all those ANBUs of Kiri that he had massacred to create a shower of blood.*

*"Yes," he replied without adding anything.*

*"Why am I not insane? Or... " he dared not continue.*

*Obito stared at him for a long time, wondering why he was talking to him, why that little boy was telling him about his plans and opening his heart. In his naive trust in the other, he reminded him a little of Naruto.*

*Maybe that was why he replied, "You've found something to stay sane about."*

*He had believed that Tsuki no Me was what kept him sane, instead he had been a perfect fool. He too had slaughtered a team - Kiri's team - and took revenge on Konoha's lies, on his sensei for being late. He had wanted to make him feel his own helplessness.*

*At his words, a shy smile crept across Shisui's lips, widening more and more as he caught an illumination.*

*"Yes, I found... someone".*

*You're going to lose him, Obito wanted to tell him, because that's the way things have always been in this world. He would have lost them, as he had lost Rin.*

*He looked at the little boy with his silly mawkish smile and lost gaze, he felt a strange sympathy.*

*"If your plan fails, you will be kicked out of your clan. You will be a traitor ".*

*Shisui recovered. "I will take the risk".*

*His voice was firm and inevitable, like that of a real shinobi ready to face any danger. He silently scoffed at him.*

*"If that happens, look for me. I'll take care of you ".*

*Shisui's eyes widened, but he couldn't say anything. Obito had activated the Mangekyo and he was slipping into the floor, swallowed by kamui.*

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He stopped, nearly losing his grip on the branch he had jumped onto. He was out of breath, the sight of him was playing tricks on him and this was already the third time he was in danger of falling in the middle of a leap. Shisui looked over his shoulder, grumbling that she had now put enough space between him and the inn, between him and... Itachi.

His one eye pulsed, reminding him of what he had just done to Itachi. But it was better this way, he had known for a long time that his bond with Itachi could not continue to last, that the time would come when their ideals would collide. They had been enemies for four years, they couldn't continue that game.

Shisui wished Kotoamatsukami had erased his memory too.

He shook his head, it would have been too complicated to do so and he had acted on instinct, within a minute. He would keep the memories, their history, but when they met again Itachi would not remember. They were just enemies now.

Despite his resolve, his heart ached. Of the whole body, that seemed to be the most fatigued muscle. Maybe he could slow down, by now he was very close to Ame and surely he had no one at his heels.

He descended from the branch with an elegant jump, absorbing the impact with a grimace. The earthy smell of the undergrowth tickled his nose, his humidity filtered heavily, a sign that the land of eternal rain was near. He would have done the piece to the border by walking.

He stretched his sore muscles, grateful that he was solid on the ground and that he didn't have to use his chakra to keep himself erect. He began to walk among the tall weeds and gnarled roots, unimpressed by the absence of a path. Despite his calm face, he kept all his senses alert. Close to Ame or not, he was still in the Land of Fire.

That was why he immediately noticed the presence towering over him from the trees. He froze, his hand running to the pouch of weapons before realizing that chakra was familiar.

Pissed off, but familiar.

Instead of rejoicing that he wasn't caught by an enemy, he frowned. At that moment he was not exactly in a good mood, he wanted time for himself and for his mourning, to savor the pain in his veins at the thought of what he had just lost. Surely he did not have the energy to bear Obito and his reproaches, he already knew that his relative could not tolerate his encounters with Itachi.

*Well, now he'll be happy, there won't be any more,* he grumbled to himself. Then he braced himself and lifted his face to the source of the swirling, dense chakra. He spotted him

immediately, Obito was perched on a low and uncovered branch, not to mention the brightly colored mask that attracted all the attention.

If there was one thing that Shisui hated with all of himself it was that fucking orange mask. He usually could guess quite well what mood Obito was in and what character he was playing from his expression of him, but that mask was an indecipherable wall. He was disturbed by the absolutely empty way in which that hole stared at him from above, crouched on that branch.

Who was he? Madara or Tobi? Either answer would have sucked, but maybe at that moment he preferred having to talk to Madara, who at least was logical and rational.

He sighed and crossed his arms. "Anything to say?" he blurted out.

A pine cone was thrown at him.

"Bad Shisui! You're bad!" complained the eldest Uchiha. "Escape like this and abandon ourselves, ugh! Bro before hoe, that's our motto! Instead you are bad and bad!! "

He made a face. Great, Tobi, just his lucky day.

"I'm not in the mood, Obito," he said ashen in the face.

He started walking again, but it was not long before Tobi hit him with another pine cone, complaining of his cold temper and his betrayal.

"You ran away secretly just to see your boyfriend," he accused him tearfully. "You leave your friends just to make..."

Shisui did not let him finish. He caught another pine cone on the fly and threw it back at her in anger. A screeching sound of pure surprise came out of Tobi as he saw the bullet coming at him, he waved his arms and to avoid it he fell foolishly from the branch.

"Bad! You hurt me!" he whimpered, rubbing his butt.

"I'm serious Obito, this is not the time".

He kept his expression serious and fatal while his attitude in the other changed. Tobi stopped fidgeting in awkward movements and launching sharp verses of pain, he suddenly froze and even the aura around him seemed to change, become darker. With a fluid gesture he stood up, brushed the dust off the akatsuki cape with measured gestures.

"The brat is being spoiled," he commented, his voice much lower and hoarse than a few seconds before. "He thinks it's all due to him ..."

Shisui immediately felt his mouth dry as he felt the power enveloping Madara, and his ears blushed.

"You don't understand," Shisui muttered.

"No?" Madara scoffed at him measured. "Maybe you're right. I don't understand what makes you risk so much. I only understand that for your teenage drama you are putting the whole organization at risk ".

*From that pulpit, you put the world in danger for your teenage drama*, Shisui bit his tongue to keep from muttering it. He knew of the old Tsuki no Me plan, above all he knew that it should never be lifted in front of Obito in order not to risk being ferociously mutilated. It had happened to Hidan ... the only reason he was still alive was his immortality, Kakuzo had been very patient in putting the pieces back together.

Instead he said, "I'm not putting it at risk, I'm not telling him anything important."

Madara laughed at him again in that little snort full of sarcasm.

"Fugaku's brat is smart enough to glean some information even from the number of times you shit," he pointed out. "You know better than me."

Yes, Shisui definitely knew firsthand what kind of genius Itachi was ... and perhaps in their last conversation he had let himself go a little too much, but what did it matter? Kotoamatsukami was infallible, he wouldn't remember anything from that conversation. Nothing... *nothing*.

The thought of him made his heart contract once more.

"Well, you have nothing more to worry about. This was the last time" he added risking choking as he realized that he would never touch that smooth skin, tighten that hair, listen to that voice.

Even with the mask on, Madara's skepticism was palpable.

"Sure, you say that every time. Every time you come back like a dog to him," he concluded with open contempt.

"No, this time it's true."

"Sure," he repeated.

Shisui took a deep breath, his words were stuck in his mouth like thorns, they hurt. His closed fists trembled and he lowered his eyes. Breathing hurt.

"That's true," he repeated. "I ... I made him forget everything."

Everything: their first meeting, the training together since childhood, hidden in their corner of the forest, their stupid and clumsy and meaningless first kiss, all the bravest kisses that had been since, the moments in which they had shared their dreams, in which they had opened up to each other, all the times he had combed his hair, the first time he had touched curious and uncertain, the first time they had made love as enemies, but still lovers . He had forgotten *everything*.

Before he could restrain himself, he burst into tears. He collapsed to the ground on the dirty ground, the tall grass and gnarled roots. His eye throbbed painfully, burned as it tried to squeeze out all the tears he had failed to hold on its own.

He curled into himself, closing in like a hedgehog and sinking his face to his knees. He wanted to shut out the rest of the world, be alone in his pain, be left alone to bear it.

But Obito couldn't just disappear by ignoring him.

While he was still shaking with violent sobs he didn't hear the light footstep on the undergrowth, but he couldn't ignore the gentle grip on his hair. Kind but firm, which forced him to raise his face and show all his tears.

There was no longer the mask, there was Obito's face staring at him frowning and scrupulous, the numerous scars in relief due to his accentuated expression.

"You're bleeding," he noted. "You used Kotoamatsukami".

He didn't answer, it was pretty obvious, especially if he was bleeding. After all, he had used his Mangekyo twice in a row without having the right rest in the short break... it happened to bleed when he asked for an effort greater than his forced one.

Obito let go of him and tried to quickly return to hide his face, but his hand moved to grab him firmly on the chin. With the other he wiped the blood and tears from his cheekbones. The missing eyelid was crying too, he didn't even know it was possible... it was humiliating. It was heartbreaking.

He sobbed harder. "I lost him ... I'll lose my mind ... I'll go insane".

He had just cut the only thread that kept him sane, he could already feel the effects. His eyes burned, his soul was in turmoil and torn between the desire to curl up somewhere and burn the whole forest. The Forests of Fire... would have given them a real reason to call themselves that.

"Calm down, you're being influenced" Obito scolded him as he finished wiping his face, but new tears kept adding.

Shisui could not calm his breathing, continued to be sobbing as if he were choking, the capillaries of his eye had reddened all over the cornea. He looked like a madman at that moment, with disheveled hair, a very pale face and a shocked expression.

Obito moved both hands to the tempos, massaging the sweaty skin with his fingertips. Green chakra shone from his chakra points, connecting with those of Shisui; Obito tried to reduce stress, to heal the damage in the ocular chakra lattice caused by the excessive use of Mangekyo.

That little shrewdness seemed to work, his head stopped being heavy and even the pain behind his eyes vanished until he allowed him to take a real, deep breath.

"Well, you're not going insane," Obito repeated. "If you didn't go insane at six when you developed it, it won't happen now. Reassemble yourself".

At his abrupt words from him Shisui's lower lip quivered, then - before he knew it - he collapsed against Obito in search of a hug, his head resting on his shoulder as he soaked his collar with tears.

*Teenagers*, Obito thought in exasperation, even though Shisui was twenty years old by now ...

Resigned, he ran a hand over the overgrown brat's back hoping to reassure him enough to put together a meaningful sentence.

"I made him forget everything ... he forgot me ..."

From his mumbling Obito still managed to put the situation together, he must have put Itachi under a powerful genjutsu that had rewritten his memories.

"Why?" he asked, not seeing the point of doing it.

The question seemed to spur Shisui to regain control over himself, took a deep breath and tried to stop the shaking of his body. He continued to hold on to him, though.

"Because as long as he keeps looking for me like that, I'll keep getting found," he admitted. "And he can't go on... you're right, I'm putting you in danger. Especially now that I'm back on Konoha's radar, they will start looking for me again and it will be more difficult".

In other circumstances Obito would have been more than happy to hear him say it, but considering he was a puddle of tears and pain he couldn't really be. Love Uchiha, damn, why did it always have to be so deep?

"So far you got away with it" he tried to mumble.

"He wanted to catch me, this time for real," he admitted. "He put handcuffs on me and asked me a lot of questions."

"So you put him under genjutsu and ran away?"

The second of hesitant silence made him worry.

"...No. I answered..."

The anger rose suddenly, grabbed him by the shoulders and pushed him badly away from him to see his face.

"Fuck, brat!" he blurted out. Now he understood the need for the genjutsu of memory

Shisui's face was dissolved in tears. "I didn't answer him directly, I tried to be evasive, but... But he knew that we were the ones who took the Scroll. And that we want to use it for Naruto. And he kept asking me who I worked for... And I... I tried to avoid answering". His tone had returned hastily, alarming Obito. "But you're right, Itachi is smart. I risked that he

understood everything ... He probably understood everything ... but I wanted him to understand me! And I asked him ... I proposed it to him ... "

"What?" he asked patiently as he seemed to be stuck in sobs again.

Shisui looked at him with an eye cloudy with tears.

"To leave Konoha and run away with me," he replied faintly, sighed in agony. "He did not want to".

Of course not, Itachi was annoyingly similar to Kakashi on this one: no matter how much shit the village threw at him, he would remain loyal until his last breath in Konoha. He found himself staring at Shisui with pity, had his love for him blinded him to the point of not realizing that Itachi would always choose the village, even against his own good?

The ideology of shinobi villages ruined people, he was increasingly convinced of it.

He sighed. "You already knew his position."

"I thought ... I was hoping he regretted it over the years," he admitted.

He shook his head at that naivety, but he didn't want to interfere. Even though he really believed Shisui wasn't going to go insane, it wasn't healthy to push him.

"Calm down," he urged then. "When you have calmed down you will tell me what happened."

He ran his hand over Shisui's back, wondering if the advice he had read in the pedagogical manuals could also work on a 20-year-old. After all, he had read somewhere that those who had suffered trauma tended at certain times to demote as a child, considering that Shisui was a ninja from an early age who had developed Mangekyo at the age of six he had too many unresolved traumas.

Eventually he was silent, letting Shisui tune his breathing to regulate hers and stop sobbing. Seeing him calmer, he brushed off his last tears.

"Here you see. It is all right".

Shisui shook her head. "It is not. They are looking for Naruto, they want Kyūbi back".

"We knew they would try to get him back, that's not new."

"But according to our information they believed he was dead. They know that he is alive and... they will really start looking for him again".

"And we will know how to answer. Naruto is no longer eight, he is learning to defend himself. And he has a bunch of mercenaries to cover his ass. Besides me," he added.

Shisui tried a smile, but it worked just for a few seconds. Shisui raised a hand to wipe his eye, bruising it even more with his fist.

"Itachi was already aware that I didn't work alone, but I ... confirmed it to him. He thought I had kidnapped Naruto, I wanted to explain to him that it wasn't like that. That it was he who chose to leave, because you told him everything ".

Obito sighed, it wasn't much but so now they knew there was a criminal organization to look for. How long would it take them to track down Akatsuki? Pain wasn't worried about the prospect, he wanted the shinobi world to know of their existence ... Iwa and some smaller villages were already aware of them, even asking for their intervention when needed. But having Konoha on your trail wasn't something to be taken lightly.

"So you told him about me?" he asked patiently.

Fortunately he shook his head. "No, but at a certain point he said that I was shoveling like Madara would have done ... and I could have replied that maybe it was Madara who opened my eyes ..."

Obito darkened a bit. "What was his reaction?"

"He seemed ... confused and exasperated."

He meditated on it a bit. There were many ways to interpret such a thing, both in the literal sense - Madara was still alive - and in a metaphorical sense - Shisui had read the transcripts on the former clan leader, assimilating his ideals. These two answers were harmless ... But Itachi could think that Shisui was talking about an admirer of Madara, probably another Uchiha, and there was a risk that they would notice the existence of Obito, who had not died that day.

"Other?" he asked him.

"... I may have said that my group is a new dawn for the world."

At this he cursed loudly. If Itachi had returned to Konoha with similar information, they would have found out about Akatsuki in no time. Luckily, in the end it had erased his memory.

"Are you sure he won't remember anything?" he asked him out of scruple.

Shisui nodded. "He has forgotten everything about us. Everything "he repeated trembling.

"And you are certain that genjutsu cannot be broken."

"Kotoamatsukami is infallible," he reminded him. "Maybe only another Mangekyo can solve it ... but he should have developed the Tsukiyomi, or at least another quite powerful genjutsu ability ... And anyway we two are the only Uchiha to have a Mangekyo" he concluded.

Obito did not comment. True, they had no information that another Uchiha had developed Mangekyo sharingan in those four years, but their information may have been incomplete. Without counting...



"Kakashi has my eye. And Danzo yours ". Shisui snapped his mouth shut and Obito continued: "If they notice that he is under genjutsu they could try to break it."

Shisui frowned. "But... Kamui isn't about genjutsu and Kakashi doesn't know how to use it yet. And Danzo ... we discovered that if I don't use it, the recharge time of the chakra needed for kotoamatsukami is much longer, if Danzo has used it recently he will not be able to break the genjutsu on Itachi ".

"If he has used it recently," Obito repeated. "We can't risk that much. It is best to act on the basis of the worst possible scenario, which is that Itachi remembers your last conversation ".

At that prospect Shisui seemed to take offense. "Kotoamatsukami is infallible," he repeated.

"And Itachi is a genius," he reminded him bitingly. "I don't trust him and I don't want to underestimate him."

He lowered his eyes, taking a deep breath. "If he remembers he knows what I did to him, so he'll hate me. However, there is no longer the risk that we will meet in secret" he concluded.

Right, that was the drama the boy was trying to overcome, not the fact that sensitive information had been compromised and Konoha would soon be chasing the entire organization. He sighed and put a hand through his hair, somehow trying to comfort him.

"You already knew it would end like this, we warned you that it was a destiny already written. You both made your choices, you chose a new world and Itachi the old one. That changed everything," he completed.

Shisui's eye returned shiny. "Chosen... they hunted me down. I wanted to help and they betrayed me." He growled in frustration. "I was forced to choose".

"And do you regret escaping, joined the Akatsuki?"

He looked at him as if he were insane. "Of course not!"

"So, brat, stop whining and pull yourself together. We have a meeting this evening ".

Shisui sighed, you just couldn't have a moment of peace.

"Meeting on what?"

"Kisame has information to share. In addition, we need to discuss with Pain the latest implications with Konoha ".

He shook his head disconsolately. "I wish I could hate Itachi as you hate Kakashi."

"You should do that, given the attempt to stab you in the back of him," he reminded him.

"They're just manipulating him," he tried to justify it.

"That's true," Obito agreed. "But the problem is Itachi is smart enough to notice and get rid of it. I think there is a reason why he lets himself be manipulated like this".

He pursed his lips and didn't reply, knowing that Obito was right. If Itachi let them use him as a weapon it was because he agreed and saw it as the only possible way to guarantee peace, even if it was fictitious ...

Obito interrupted his thoughts by extending his gloved hand.

"Let's go," he urged.

Shisui hesitated briefly, but then squeezed it. As the kamui sucked him out of the undergrowth he felt a cramp of guilt.

Because he hoped that Obito's worst fears were true and that Itachi hadn't forgotten him.

## Chapter End Notes

Hey there, new chapter!

What can I say except that Obito is paranoid? Since he is absolutely right, Itachi has managed to free himself from genjutsu, never underestimate him u.u

Small basic notes: I know that in Itachi's novel and filler it is shown that Fugaku has Mangekyo, but I've always found her a great antic. In the canon it is suggested that Itachi's development of Mangekyo is an exceptional thing, so I prefer to follow this line where before him only Shisui had developed it at that time, also because in reality this is canonically so. I wanted to add that part about Kagami for a personal whim, let's leave some crumbs on the good relationship between Tobirama and his favorite student of him (which no, it wasn't Sarutobi u.u at least not in that sense lol)

However, if Shisui seemed too emotional, remember that Uchiha are drama queen by genetics xD

No more chatting, I hope you liked it and to see some more comments, you know it makes me happy to read your opinions <3

A peck, stay safe

# Loyalty

## Chapter Notes

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

Hiruzen thoughtfully inhaled from his pipe, not happy with the scene in front of him. He already had an inkling of bad news when Danzo had told him that he had to speak to him urgently. Entering his office Hiruzen had found Itachi already there, kneeling in front of the desk and the ANBU uniform on. Judging by the little details of wear and the mud on his shoes, he wasn't there ready for a mission. Itachi had *returned* from a mission. Hiruzen hadn't sent Itachi any scrolls recently, that mission wasn't his work.

Hiruzen shifted his gaze to Danzo as Hiruzen took his place in the high-backed chair. He felt too tired and old as his joints protested at his sitting down. He crossed his fingers on the desk.

"Report," he conceded.

Itachi didn't look up from the floor and it was Danzo who spoke.

"Since Shisui's betrayal I have allowed myself to entrust Itachi with a secret mission of the utmost importance: to spy on him".

Hiruzen didn't like that preamble. He raised an eyebrow as he studied how much tobacco was left in the pipe, this conversation needed nicotine.

"Shisui has been untraceable for years, the sighting the other day was the first since his disappearance," Hiruzen pointed out. "If one of our shinobi had met him earlier, he would have been pleased to let me know," he added with a reproachful note.

Danzo didn't bat an eye, nor did Itachi move from his kneeling position.

"I ordered Itachi to look for Shisui and, in case he found him, not to start any fights with him and try not to come across as a threat. His mission would have been to get Shisui to speak".

Exactly what Hiruzen feared. He was too old for all of that.

"Why?" he asked.

"We both know about Shisui's... special interest in Itachi."

They knew it well, yes. It was obvious to anyone who knew them and for this reason the boy's betrayal had seemed even more absurd. If there was someone who mattered more than Konoha to Shisui, it was Itachi, it didn't make sense that he abandoned him like that.

"Keeping this secret from me is treason," Hiruzen warned.

"I will accept any consequence" replied Danzo with the tranquility of one who knew that in reality he was untouchable. He was right about this, Hiruzen was furious but there would be

no action. However unorthodox his childhood friend's ways, Danzo was too valuable a collaborator, able to make the decisions Hiruzen's scruples prevented him from making.

"To come and tell me now, you'd have to have some information," he considered, so he repeated harshly: "Report."

Danzo moved his eyes to the young man and Itachi finally opened his mouth. His gaze remained fixed on the floor.

"After Danzo-sama entrusted me with this mission, I was able to find Shisui only two years and three months after his betrayal. Following Danzo's instructions, I didn't come across as a threat. After the initial mistrust Shisui agreed to stay with me. We have continued to see each other these past two years, irregularly and without my being able to obtain any information. Danzo-sama told me to persist." He took a breath, throughout the story his tone of voice had been neutral and detached, as if it were a machine speaking. "In his confrontation with Team 7, he left my brother a coded message for me: the location of our next meeting. I left the day after I received it. Yesterday".

"What place?" Hiruzen asked annoyed to find that one of his best ANBU had managed to leave the village without anyone noticing.

"An inn on the border. I've already given Danzo-sama the coordinates on the card." He raised his eyes briefly and at the Hokage's nod he resumed speaking. "This time I tried to incapacitate him and face him. Shisui was able to elude my every attempt."

Hiruzen frowned. "Why? Did Danzo authorize you?"

He shook his head. "It was my initiative, caused by the attack carried out against team 7. So far Shisui had not attacked a companion of Konoha, I thought that now that he had officially proved to be a threat it was my duty to stop him".

"But you couldn't do it."

Danzo intervened: "This time, however, he managed to make him speak. Tell him what you found out," he ordered.

"The real instigator of the theft of the Forbidden Scroll is Shisui," he said. "Or rather, the organization he works for."

"Did you find out which one?"

He sighed. "He just said it was *a new dawn for the world*. It is made up of nukenin from various nations. He called them *monsters that the villages have created*, I guess they are controversial shinobi with particular kekkei genkai, for which they have been stigmatized by the civilian population and therefore have betrayed their own village".

*Like a Jinchuriki*, Hiruzen meditated feeling bad. But he had no reports of thefts of Bijū from other villages... of course, officially and diplomatically the other villages did not know that they had lost their Jinchuriki. Could the same situation exist in other countries? That like

them they had been robbed of their own Bijū, but making sure that the news did not leak? He had to send his own spies to investigate.

*A new dawn for the world...* those words were familiar to him. He was sure he had read them in one of Jiraiya's last messages about Orochimaru's movements before he stopped sending updates.

"More?"

"Shisui was very careful not to miss anything, he mainly spoke in riddles. But..." Itachi hesitated. "It was someone who convinced him to betray, someone who is also truly responsible for the kidnapping of Uzumaki Naruto. That someone could be Uchiha Madara. Or a self-styled one".

Hiruzen felt the pipe slip from his parted lips, but he paid no attention to it. The shock had been too strong. He hoped never to hear that name again. He especially did not expect that ghost to be exhumed in such a speech. It was madness to hear, but he knew Itachi was smart and must have had his reason for saying so.

"What makes you believe that?" Hiruzen asked then trying not to show how much the prospect unsettled him. He was still the Hokage.

He sensed some hesitation on the boy's part. "He started making dangerous speeches, he accused Konoha of not being able to create peace... I told him that he was making the same speeches as Uchiha Madara". He looked up, his eyes were dull and dull. "Shisui said maybe Madara inspired him."

He knew for sure that the Uchiha had erased all traces of Madara's existence within the clan. The memory of him persisted tenaciously, he was the ghost that the children were afraid of and imagined that in the close nucleus of the chieftain some fragments of him remained. But Shisui had no way of getting to know Madara's ideals to the point of saying he was inspired by them. After all, the same bloodline of Konoha's old enemy had become extinct with Obito's death, when Shisui was just a child.

Itachi knew these things as well as he did, so he must have ruled out that it was Madara's memory that inspired him, opting for a flesh-and-blood version. He didn't want to believe Madara was still alive, but maybe some impersonator...

"What else?"

"They want to use the Scroll because of the Kyūbi's seal, to improve it according to his words." He didn't make a face. "And Shisui insisted he was betrayed on first..." His eyes slid to Danzo. "And then he asked me to run away with him, to join his group." Itachi's jaw tightened. "I refused."

Obviously. Even if it would have been useful to have an infiltrator, it was a risk that had to be calculated to the millimeter and not improvised. It was a good thing Itachi hadn't taken any more personal steps.

The boy spoke without being pushed to do so.

“I told him about the deal between the council and the Uchiha Clan.”

For the second time, Hiruzen nearly lost his pipe. "Oh..."

He wasn't exactly happy that he had done it and Itachi sensed the implied rebuke.

“I thought seeing the problem solved would change his mind,” he admitted.

It was a naive thought, the first naive thought that Hiruzen saw Itachi formulate. He didn't scold him too much though. As smart as he was, he was just a seventeen-year-old boy tormented by loss. He remembered how Kagami was at seventeen, with his feelings impossible to suppress, the only thing that made him irrational as hell. It was amazing that Itachi held on so well.

“Is there anything else you want to add?”

He nodded. “When it was clear that we were not going to reach any agreement, Shisui put me on genjutsu. He made me forget our past together, our friendship”. He paused a little. "I woke up alone, convinced that that meeting hadn't taken place and Shisui was a stranger."

"But now you remember."

“I had prepared a counter-move in case something like this happened,” he explained.

As was to be expected of him. Itachi would never slip into an enemy's mouth without safety nets, even if that enemy was Shisui.

“So he thinks you've forgotten everything, but you haven't,” Hiruzen summed up. “We have an advantage. We know that he is really responsible for the theft of the Scroll, that he and his associates are trying to do something with the Jinchuriki and that Uchiha Madara may be involved in all of this ”.

It was so much shit Hiruzen sighed. He wished he'd known before those meetings between Itachi and Shisui, but he couldn't complain since they had new information to work with. First he had to confirm the status of the other Bijū and focus on forming new underground shinobi organizations.

For a job like this he needed a particular person. A person who was doing his best to be nowhere to be found, who wanted nothing more to do with Konoha.

Hiruzen looked closely at Itachi still in his ANBU uniform.

"I have a new mission for you" he declared and the boy shrugged, waiting for instructions. Hiruzen took a sheet and started writing fast. “I need you to find Jiraiya the Sannin. These are the places where he was last seen”, and they were all too many years ago, unfortunately. He rolled up the parchment and handed it to Itachi. “Your mission will be to find him and convince him to return. You are authorized to explain to him what has been said in this room if necessary. But I warn you: he doesn't know about the kidnapping of our Jinchuriki, he may

not take it well. You can tell him if it will help to convince Jiraiya to come back, but your discussion will have to be discreet. I don't want an information leak."

Itachi nodded, taking the scroll without reading its contents. Hiruzen then turned to Danzo.

"ROOT agents will have to support the regular ANBU in searching for Shisui... and I want spies in other villages, our best men."

"Our best spy is Hatake Kakashi," Danzo pointed out calmly.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw Itachi tense, but he didn't notice. He brushed aside his adviser's suggestion with a wave of his hand.

"Kakashi has his own genin team to think about. We'll find someone else."

Danzo didn't like the decision, but other than a grimace of disagreement he did or said nothing.

"Itachi-kun," he called then, softening his voice, "finding Jiraiya is of the utmost priority. You will leave tonight, it is better that you go and rest for a few hours. You can go".

When he was dismissed, the boy lowered his head in a bow. Then with a flicker his presence vanished, quickly teleported by a Shunshin. Left alone, Hiruzen concentrated only on Danzo. He glared at him, nostrils flaring. The old friend remained unperturbed.

"It had to be done" he justified himself.

The Sandaime walked with quick steps around the room. "Do not you ever do it again. Itachi is not one of your men, you must remember that " he hissed.

"Not yet," Danzo replied in the same peaceful tone.

Hiruzen shot him a sidelong glance. "Until then, remember your place. If you want to entrust Itachi with other missions, you'll have to discuss it with me first."

"You wouldn't have accepted."

*Of course not.* He knew that from a strategic point of view, the choice to use Itachi to lure Shisui was a winner given the deep bond that united those boys... but precisely because of that bond he knew that all that had hurt Itachi. It was never wise to play with a person's feelings, especially if that person was an Uchiha.

"No," he confirmed then without blinking. He straightened his back, trying to show all of his authority with his bearing. "But *I am the Hokage*, I am the one who decides and orders. Never forget it".

Danzo made an annoyed grimace but nodded his assent, that was enough for him. Hiruzen turned to one of the large windows, looked at his beautiful and beloved village and sighed. He felt the breeze that he knew of spring leaves, the laughter of children and the calls of adults. They were all serene, peaceful.

Hiruzen was too old to believe that peace would last forever; he had known ever since he had signed the non-aggression treaties in the Third War that a new cataclysm would occur. The Kyubi's attack had only been an advance, that serenity so dear to his village was about to end.

His eyes fell on the Hokage mountain. Next to his still young face stood Tobirama, impassive and now eternal.

*Sensei, I hope I made the right choices...* he sighed.

\*\*

Itachi had slipped inside his room without being noticed by anyone in the house. His family didn't even know he was gone, so he didn't want to alarm them just now. Luckily he'd spent enough nights out with Kakashi that they never questioned his absence. His parents tolerated that relationship with the indifference of one who knew it would not last.

The thought of Kakashi crushed his heart. He loved him, but just a few hours ago he had told Shisui that he loved him and Itachi really meant it. Itachi was sincere when he told both of them... and Kakashi knew nothing of that secret mission, of his constant betrayal. Had it been just a mission it would have been easier to deal with guilt, but Shisui was *never just a mission*. Shisui was always much, *too much more*.

Kakashi didn't deserve something like this.

Just as he had entered, Itachi left through the bedroom window without being seen. In his civilian clothes he jumped from branch to branch until he was outside the Uchiha compound. He landed in the middle of an empty street, then merged into a main one. His senses were on high alert as he tried to sense the familiar chakra.

Itachi found him on a tree-lined side street, completely empty. Itachi got under one of the trees and raised his head, looking for the man, but the foliage was so thick that he couldn't make out anything. Shaking his head in amusement, he leaped and landed on the first available branch. He scrambled up to find Kakashi hidden in the leaves, sitting on a squat branch and his back leaning against the trunk; obviously he was reading *Icha Icha*.

"Already back?" Kakashi asked, raising his eyebrows slightly over his one visible eye.

Itachi settled himself on the same branch in front of him. "It was a quick mission. Shouldn't you be with your students?"

"I should," he confirmed lazily, "if I hadn't been mutinied."

Itachi arched an eyebrow silently inviting him to explain himself better.



“Sasuke decided not to show up, Himawari decided that if Sasuke didn't show up she wouldn't stay and Sakura...” He shrugged. “It didn't make sense to train only her,” he concluded.

He pursed his lips. "You know, my brother does this because he doesn't approve of your teaching method."

“Do I have a teaching method? Interesting, I didn't know that."

Itachi rolled his eyes and kicked him with his foot. "Sasuke really wants to be trained, from what he tells me you're not doing anything."

“Let's not exaggerate. We are the genin team with the highest number of successful missions.”

"D-rank missions," he pointed out mercilessly. “. Looking for lost animals, cleaning gardens, repainting... Sasuke is smart, he's bored. He needs to learn something and it is your duty as a sensei to teach him”.

Despite his mask, Itachi still saw Kakashi's lips curl into a childish pout at his rebuke.

"I didn't want to be a teacher. I don't know how to do it," he complained.

"It is not true. You've been a great captain with me."

“We were in ANBU, it's different,” he insisted. “What should I teach him? To kill and how to hide the corpse? They are *children*."

“I was eleven,” he reminded him mildly.

The gray iris darkened with bitterness. "Is not the same thing".

No, it wasn't, Itachi knew that too. Itachi had always been different, not only from his peers but also from all other shinobi. Except Kakashi, who became Jonin at the age of twelve, with a direct and fundamental intervention in the ongoing war as his first mission. Only another child genius would understand the responsibility of another child genius. Their world followed completely different rules than the rest of the people.

Kakashi had always understood this, even when he was one of his subordinates in the ANBU. Kakashi had always been a reference figure to be admired. Maybe Itachi shouldn't have been surprised if those love feelings had blossomed, if not him who?

*Shisui*, prompted a voice in his head.

But Shisui had betrayed Itachi, he had denied everything they believed in. He had tried to erase his memory, their moments together... Shisui had said goodbye. But in reality Shisui had already abandoned Itachi for four years, that mission had created a limbo that could not exist. Because Shisui had abandoned him and Itachi now loved Kakashi.

He looked at the older man, although only a little of his face was visible Itachi could still make out how attractive his features were. Kakashi tilted his head curiously and Itachi gave a small smile. Nimble and silent Itachi moved on the branch until he sat astride Kakashi's lap, Kakashi pushed his back against the trunk and placed a hand on Itachi's thighs, looking for a new balance. His curiosity turned to surprise.

"Oh?" Kakashi sighed questioningly.

Neither of them were very tactile people, they never made similar gestures outside the bedroom and never sought physical contact. They were reserved and their love for each other was mostly expressed through their gazes. Itachi could then understand there to Kakashi's surprise upon seeing him do something so daring in a public place.

Without answering Itachi raised a hand and stroked Kakashi's cheekbone, his fingers wedging themselves on the edge of the tight mask and pushed to pull it down, to expose his skin. Kakashi let him, motionless and curious. But when Itachi pressed their lips together, Kakashi returned the languid kiss, tightening his grip on Itachi's thigh. Itachi closed his eyes, tasting the taste of his mouth, returning the wet movements of his tongue, pressing his lips harder to the point where his teeth clashed. Kakashi's other hand had gone to his hair, clutching at his long strands in a way that threatened to undo the elastic.

Itachi broke contact realizing he was getting too excited, when he recoiled Kakashi was a little out of breath.

"Oh," he repeated. "From what?"

He shrugged. The man's hand was still in his hair, he ran his fingers to stroke it and comb it, a comforting gesture on his back. The look in his gray eye had softened.

"Everything is fine?" Kakashi asked while the other hand also lessened the grip and began to caress him reassuringly.

That shrewdness made Itachi feel a lump in his throat, he longed to kiss him again.

*Alert, protective and loyal Kakashi.*

He thought that in all of Konoha there couldn't be a better person than Kakashi. His life had forced him to endure so much, yet Kakashi continued on his way without abandoning faith in his companions. Konoha's shinobi had driven his father to suicide, his precious companions had died for Konoha's sake, and he had been prevented from approaching the son of the only man who had managed to give him a family; instead they had thrown it into the mud, into the darkness of ANBU, only as a cutting weapon. That was the fate of all shinobi, but Itachi was sure that fate had asked too much of Kakashi. Kakashi would have every reason to despise their world, to abandon Konoha. But he didn't. *He stayed*, because Kakashi's best quality was loyalty.

Kakashi would *never* betray him.

Itachi cupped Kakashi's face in his hands, his fingertips brushing the bare skin of his cheeks. It was so rare to see his entire face that Itachi activated the sharingan without thinking.

"Will you take care of Sasuke?" he asked softly.

Kakashi poked his tongue at his palate. "Oh. I see what you're trying to do: you seduce me into coaching your brother."

"Are you only realizing it now, taicho?" he teased deciding to play along. "This plan has been going on for ten months now."

"I remember, yes. You found out I was going to be Sasuke's sensei and you came looking for me with your cute passive-aggressive attitude to make sure I was a good sensei."

Itachi arched a cute eyebrow. "I just wanted to know what your schedule would be, if you had one."

"And I told you I didn't have one. So you seduced me."

Itachi tugged at a silver strand of hair. "No. Asuma-san came to celebrate the assignments and go for a drink, I found myself in the middle of the invitation too. Then Gai-san challenged you to a drinking contest and you both got drunk, I was given the mission to bring you home safely."

"But *you undressed me* while I was in bed".

"You were still wearing your shinobi clothes and you couldn't even untie your shoes. I did my duty."

Kakashi's lips curled into a small pout. "Then how did it happen?"

Itachi stroked those pouty lips. "It just... happened."

A gust of wind rose, slipping through the branches of the tree and making the leaves vibrate in a sweet and rustling music. Kakashi looked at him without saying anything, his penetrating eye calm, reassuring and sweet; that man was the certainty of him that began by chance.

The jounin placed his rough hand on his and moved his face kissing his palm.

"I'll keep Sasuke safe no matter what," Kakashi promised quietly, but his tone was vibrant with assurance of his intentions. "I will not let anything happen to my genin."

Itachi let out a small sigh.

*Kind, protective and loyal Kakashi.*

"Thank you".

The meeting table was almost complete with the arrival of Kisame and the return of Tobi and Shisui. Only Sasori was missing, still around gathering information from his spies. Deidara had well thought of occupying the empty series with the working material of his explosive clay.

Pain carefully observed each member present. Everything seemed as usual: Hidan was shouting about something, Deidara was replying and Kakuzo was quietly threatening to cut off their tongues, pointing out how much that organ cost on the black market; Tobi intervened from time to time to stir things up with utterly out of place phrases, causing Naruto to burst out laughing sitting on his lap, while Kisame watched, chuckling at ease. Only Shisui was out of character: he was too silent and hunched over himself, his depressed expression and eyes so black that he doubted it was just because of the prolonged use of Mangekyo.

Not that Pain cared about the state of mind of an overgrown teenager, this was a meeting.

He glanced at Konan beside him, she understood immediately. At the blink of an eye, a deadly sharp-pointed paper plane flew across the table with a whir, making everyone jump. Having had their attention, Pain spoke.

“What news do you bring, Kisame?” skipped every pleasantry.

The shark man smirked. "I come from the Land of Waves," he said, "and I bring interesting news about an ex-colleague of mine."

## Chapter End Notes

From the series: I haven't forgotten about this fic!

Sorry to have made you wait so long for a passing chapter (plus a simp chapter on Kakashi but okay), but as you can guess from the next one the saga in the land of the Waves begins! And things obviously won't go like in the original :P on the other hand we will also have Itachi looking for Jiraiya, a little side story that I hope you will like. Small note: Itachi's final "thank you" should be read as if it were an "I love you". The Japanese are very constipated with feelings, as we well know, and often rather than openly saying "I love you" they prefer to say "thank you" to the person they love. Thank you for being in my life, thank you for being here with me, for taking care of me, for letting me love you. It's very sweet.

AAAAND!

Thank you so much for your patience and constancy to follow this story despite the

geological update times ç\_\_ç also this time I can't tell you when the next chapter will be but I can assure you 100% that there will be a next chapter. This story continues!

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A kiss!

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