

Like Pinwheels in the Wind

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/4662837) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/4662837>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warnings:	No Archive Warnings Apply , Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Categories:	F/M , Gen
Fandom:	Naruto
Characters:	Orochimaru (Naruto) , Hatake Sakumo , Uchiha Kagami , Uchiha Mikoto , Namikaze Minato , Jiraiya (Naruto) , Shimura Danzou , OC - Character
Additional Tags:	Second/Third War , AU , Uchiha!OC , SI/OC
Language:	English
Collections:	Inserts Reincarnation and Transmigration , A Collection of Beloved Inserts , ✧ Konoha Collection ✧ , Best of Fanfiction , Real Good Shit , Love these so much Must not misplace Would cry if these disappear , Magnolia's Favourite Fics , Road to Nowhere Discord Recs , best fanfics: naruto edition , SakurAlpha's Fic Rec of Pure how did you create this you amazing bean , Amazing SI Stories , Hanya Fic yang Aku Sukai , saviors of aerois :> , Reincarnation and Transmigration , AnIm4sh's Favourites , cauldronrings favs (｡◕｡) , my heart is here , Yo! Read This. Seriously. , Favorite Naruto Fics , Favourite SI and Reincarnated OC Fics , Luna Cielo's Collection , Luna Cielo's Favorites , I promise to reread you 🥺❤️ , The Overly Toasted Bagel Collection , works with multiple si/oc/semi si oc characters , Completed fics , SI/OC I can't get out of my head , Modern Character in Fictional World , oh stars~! (^ O ^ ☆♪
Stats:	Published: 2015-08-26 Words: 6,567 Chapters: 1/1

Like Pinwheels in the Wind

by [Yuesya](#)

Summary

"How funny," he finally says. "That's my name, too."

Notes

Posted on ff.net sometime last year under 'XxZuiliu.'

It starts something like this:

Midsummer. Early morning. Heat simmers in the air even though the sun has yet to peek over the horizon line, and the ground beneath their feet is cracked and dry. Arid dust billows behind the group of dark-eyed children as they run through the streets, chasing each other and being chased without a care in the world.

Then one of them –a little girl– suddenly comes to an abrupt halt in her tracks. This causes the boy running behind her to very nearly bowl her over, but she does not seem to notice it in the least, her attention caught elsewhere.

"Yuki-nii?" she asks, voice soft and faintly bewildered. The other children around her continue to run, but she alone remains standing still. "Yuki-nii, what's that over there?"

The aforementioned boy straightens and glances back to where the girl is pointing, then gives a small snort when he sees what she is mentioning.

"That's the Hokage Mountain, duh," he smiles and shakes his head at her. "Don't you recognize those two Senju faces? The misshapen lump to the side is where they're still chiseling in Sarutobi-sama right now."

"... Oh."

(None of the children pay attention to the faint crease between the little girl's eyebrows, the thinning of her lips, nor the thoughtful look that enters her eyes.)

"Tag! You're it! Guys, guys, run away from Ama-chan!"

The little girl breaks out of her reverie and resumes the game.

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In the tentative peace that falls after the end of the Great War, Konoha learns to breathe again and slowly exhales a sigh of relief. Without the ominous presence of death pressing quite so close anymore, it is finally time to look forward to new life.

It is finally time to look forward to the new life that had been promised to them by Senju Hashirama when he had set about making his dreams into reality.

Yukine and Amane are twins, born to Uchiha Kagami and Uchiha Yume a year after the end of the Great War. They are but two of the many children born during this time, as lovers reunited with each other at long last and became eager to make up for the time spent apart.

Under the leadership of their new Hokage, Sarutobi Hiruzen, the village gradually eases itself away from its war-oriented mindset and into a curious sort of balance that isn't quite peace just yet, but... good enough.

Good enough.

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"Ama-chan?"

The dark-eyed girl glances up at the sound of her brother's voice. "Yes, Yuki-nii?"

"Tou-sama says we're good enough to enter the Academy now." The little boy sits down beside her by the doorway, feet swinging into the open air. "What... what do you think?"

She blinks.

"Why ask me?"

"Well..." He tilts his head at her guilelessly, "I dunno, you didn't seem too happy when tou-sama told us that this afternoon. Isn't it a good thing if we're skilled enough for the Academy?"

The little girl bites her lip. "... It is. In a manner of speaking, I guess. Don't mind me, Yuki-nii, I'm just..."

"Just...?"

"..."

"... Are you scared?" There is no judgment in the little boy's eyes, no scorn, no teasing. His voice is perfectly neutral, tinged with something akin to mere curiosity at his sister's reaction.

He reaches out and gently takes hold of the little girl's hand, coaxing her to respond.

"It's... well. A little, I suppose."

A heartbeat of silence.

"Do you think this is right?" She finally leans back, looking up at the blood-streaked sky. "We're five years old, Yuki-nii. We're five years old, and tou-sama is sending us to a school where we learn how to kill people. Doesn't it... bother you?"

The little boy pauses to think about his sister's words.

"... Should it?" He questions. "We will be learning how to protect ourselves. How to protect the Clan. How to protect Konoha. Is any of that wrong?"

His sister gives him a sad little smile.

"No. But just because something isn't wrong doesn't mean it's right."

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Yukine and Amare enter the Academy along with five other Uchiha children that year.

They learn to throw knives and set traps and memorize all the weaknesses of the human body. At home, their father puts them through the steps of Uchiha taijutsu and teaches them how to spit fire and watch the world burn.

("Good job," the man says, reaching out and ruffling his children's hair as they blink owl-like eyes at him. "Keep up the good work.")

Kagami bends down and scoops up a child in each arm to carry them home, uncaring of the blood that smears onto his sleeves.)

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The classroom is fairly empty, and Yukine sits down in the corner. Amane follows wordlessly.

Their Academy days are over. This is their last time returning to this room. They will be placed onto genin teams starting from today, and it is likely that they will be separated from each other. Yukine and Amane are twins, and the village will want to encourage in them codependence on other members of the village rather than codependence on each other. Allowing twins to remain on the same team will alienate the third member; the teamwork that Konoha preaches to its ninjas will not stand for that.

The children understand this point, though they do not like it.

"Team Six: Uchiha Yukine..."

The dark-eyed boy gives his sister's hand a gentle squeeze, before standing up and leaving the room with the rest of his team.

"Team Seven: Senju Tsunade..."

Something flickers in Amane's eyes as the blonde Senju girl bounces forward, followed by a quiet, pale-skinned boy and the loudmouth class clown. No one notices.

"Team Eight: Uchiha Amane..."

The dark-eyed girl stands up and leaves.

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("How are your team assignments?" Kagami asks his children as they stumble home that night, bruised and filthy but no worse for the wear. Yukine and Amane fold themselves into respectful bows before straightening, and Kagami smiles lightly when he sees a glimmer of frustration in his son's normally apathetic eyes.)

"Takeda-sensei is a good instructor," his son says, stifling a small scowl on his face. "I am sure that I will benefit from his tutelage. Inuzuka Heisuke and Shimura Kanna are both well-rounded for genins and will be good assets to the village one day."

Amane is slower in responding, almost as if she was mulling over her words one by one before carefully picking out her words and choosing what to say.

"Ichiru-sensei is talented," she says at last, voice deceptively soft and calm. "Yamanaka Yaten and Utatane Tomoe have potential. We will make a good team after we learn to cooperate with each other."

Kagami studies his children for a moment, before throwing his head back and laughing.

"Such diplomatic responses! Don't worry, I didn't get along well with my teammates either, when I first met them." He grins, "Did I ever tell you about the time when Danzo...?"

He doesn't even bat an eye when Amane twitches at the mention of Danzo's name. Kagami simply makes a mental note of his daughter's reaction and continues telling his children of his own genin days.)

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"Amane-chan!"

The raven-haired girl turns at her teammate's call.

"What is it, Yaten-kun?"

The blond grins excitedly, "Sensei dropped word to me just now –we're finally getting a mission out of the village today! We're taking our first C-rank!"

"Ah. I see." Amane blinks. "Thank you for telling me."

"... Wait, that's it?" The Yamanaka's jaw drops at her passive reaction. "C'mon, Amane-chan, it's our first C-rank!"

"I heard you the first time, Yaten-kun." The girl rolls her eyes lightly, "Is there anything else Ichiru-sensei asked you to tell me?"

"You're no fun at all." He bumps her shoulder, "Remember to bring some jackets with you when you pack this time. Our mission is to play guard duty for some merchants traveling to the Land of Waves."

The young girl stills for a moment.

"... The Land of Waves, hm?"

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(Time passes.

Years fly by like quicksand, and Yume watches her children grow.

Yukine is always silent and watchful, observant of anything and everything around him. It is the mark of a good shinobi, but it pains Yume to look at her son and see a stranger looking back at her with distant, detached eyes.

It isn't right.

Amane's behavior is not as unnerving as that of her brother's, but it is nonetheless... unsettling. She had always been so aware of her surroundings, even in childhood, and it just wasn't... wasn't...!

She's not a bad mother, she really isn't. She cooks and cleans and tries to be there for her children the best she can, but that's the problem. She looks at the pale-faced dark-eyed twins and she doesn't see children. It is not her fault, and neither is it theirs –she cannot fault them for being what they are– but it's simply unnatural.

In hindsight, perhaps it is not so surprising that Kagami relates to his children better than their mother does. Even though he is constantly out on missions for the Hokage and the house is bereft of his presence for long stretches of time, he never fails to ruffle his children's hair with a bright grin on his face when he sees them, never fails to hold them in a crushing hug and laugh and ask them about their day.

She still remembers that time when Amane returned from a mission with her chuunin squad, empty-eyed and covered head to toe in blood. She had... she had stiffened at the sight, because Amane... Amane's expression, it had been the exact same expression she would wear on her face whether she was returning from a training session or from a trip from the grocery store.

Kagami, on the other hand, had taken one look at his daughter, then reached out and held her against his chest. Only then had Yume seen the mask crumble, for Amane had curled her fingers into his flak jacket and buried her face against his shoulder–

For awhile, it had been enough. It had always been enough.

...

... Then one day Kagami leaves on a mission and does not return, and that is when everything begins falling apart.)

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When the Second War begins, it's more of a trickle of ambushes and assaults slowly growing into organized attacks rather than a clear-cut declaration of war that immediately unleashed hell upon the world.

(It begins because shinobi are creatures of blood; predator and prey and prey and predator and a hundred other things in-between. An endless cycle doomed to repeat itself over and over again.)

Yukine and Amare are of the same mind after the death of their father. There is no discussion needed between them as they pack their bags and leave a note on the kitchen table for their mother, as they quietly leave the house and never look back. It isn't likely that they will ever be returning again after this decision, and they know it.

A week after the funeral, Yukine and Amare disappear, and ANBU sees their newest operatives –Jackal and Hound.

Jackal is vicious. Ninjutsu is his forte, and he breathes fire and splits earth and runs as fast as the wind itself. Jackal is deadly as a midrange fighter and downright lethal in close combat, where he snaps necks and breaks spines as easily as breathing.

Hound is more reserved, but no less brutal when the time calls for it. Hound prefers to throw shuriken and launch kunai from afar, to layer genjutsu one over another and have the enemy slaughter themselves in abject confusion.

Jackal and Hound are young and hurt and grieving. This makes them fierce, makes them reckless, makes them throw themselves into battle without care for their own survival as they kill and kill and kill.

It is Wolf who snags them by the back of their necks and smacks sense into them after a particularly nasty ambush.

"Are you two fucking suicidal?!"

Yes.

No.

"If you want to die, then by all means, go die." Wolf glares at them. "I won't tolerate suicidal nutcases on my squad messing up team dynamics. I'm a captain, I lead my men with the intent of bringing them back alive –what the hell are you two thinking, trying to throw away your lives so uselessly like that?"

"What's the point?" Jackal asks. "What's the point of staying alive?"

Wolf shakes his head.

"Family. Friends." Wolf makes a vague gesture with his hands, "Don't you have anyone to live for?"

"There's no one left," Hound says this time, and it's true. Jackal's genin-promoted-to-chuunin team had been slaughtered in one of the earlier ambushes before war had been formally declared, and Hound's teammates had been crushed under an Iwa-nin-induced landslide. Their father's death was only the final nail in the coffin–

"Well, you have each other, don't you?"

Jackal and Hound blink and slowly turn to look at each other, a sort of profound realization finally dawning upon them as they comprehended the magnitude of what they had

overlooked, as they understood their captain's words.

(Wolf slaps his forehead and mutters something about blockheaded idiot-genii. This comment is tactfully ignored.)

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Hokage-sama's students face Hanzo and walk away alive.

The name of the Legendary Sannin begins to circulate the land.

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(Orochimaru is the first one to see the team of ANBU headed in their direction.

"Bout damn time," Tsunade mutters beside him, and he finds himself inclined to agree. The quality of Konoha's so-called elite troops must be slipping, if they take so long to—

One of the ANBU flips and spits out a fireball behind him. The flames tear through the air and into the... Iwa shinobi...?

"That's not the ANBU team we're waiting for," he says.

"Thanks for stating the obvious, genius" Tsunade snarks at him, and sighs, cracking her knuckles. "C'mon, we've got an ANBU team to bail out of trouble.")

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"We were to rendezvous with Wolf-taicho," Jackal says to the snake-faced ninja. Orochimaru. "Our position was leaked, apparently. Thank you for your assistance."

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Jiraiya is the first to leave, staying behind in Ame to teach a trio of orphans he found. Tsunade leaves when both her brother and her lover die, grief-stricken and swearing to never return to a village that brought her such pain. Orochimaru is the only one left, in a village that confuses respect with fear.

The war eventually winds to a close, but it is only the beginning of the end.

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("Hello, kaa-san."

Yume stares at the children that she hasn't seen in years. Yukine's eyes drift to the ground as they lapse into a stiff, awkward silence, but Amane offers a soft, hesitant smile.

It's a start.

"I thought you were dead," Yume says hoarsely, and fights the urge to cry. When she had found that letter, when she had realized that her children had left her... "I thought you were

dead."

"We thought we were, too." Yukine replies honestly, and twitches when Amane stomps on his foot for the thoughtless remark.

"We're here to... apologize, kaa-san." Amane bows her head, and Yukine quickly follows his sister's gesture. "I know we were never really close before, and tou-sama is gone now, too, but... if you're willing, we'd like to try again, give things another chance and try to do it right this time. Please."

Yume had once feared her children. But after they had left, it was as if there had been a gaping hole left in her heart. Perhaps it was simply losing both husband and children at the same time that very nearly destroyed her –and after resigning herself to the fact that her children were dead and gone and she was the only one left...

"What's the ruckus this morning, Yume?"

She winces.

"Masato-kun," she smiles at the man stepping up to the doorway behind her, acutely aware of the piercing gazes of her children standing outside. "I... um..."

Now.

... How to explain to her not-so-dead children that she had remarried and started another family in their absence?)

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"What's your name?"

"Mikoto."

Yukine and Amane stare at the young girl who is their half-sister. Mikoto stares back at them.

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(Hatake Sakumo sees them on the streets one day, recognizing their scents from days spent crouched in mud and fighting off enemy shinobi together. Jackal is holding a bag of groceries in his arms while Hound weighs an apple in her hand, and the sight makes him smile –the two have come a long way from the sorry state they had been in when they first entered ANBU.

Jackal is the first to notice him, raven eyes flickering towards his direction from his position behind his sister. Flickering, then widening. He very nearly drops the fresh produce in his arms.

"Taicho?"

"Yo," Sakumo raises a hand and smiles at his subordinates. "How's peace been suiting you two?"

"Terribly boring," Jackal replies automatically, and gets kicked in the shin by Hound almost immediately after. He winces. "I mean, we've been doing well. I think."

"Ignore him, taicho," Hound says dryly, stomping on her brother's foot again for good measure. Well, at least Sakumo now knows which one of them is better versed than the other in social niceties. "We're on the mandatory period of leave right now, but we'll be back soon."

"That's good to hear," he nods. Jackal and Hound are two of the better combat operatives in ANBU, who complement each other's skills quite nicely. It is a comfort to know that he has Jackal and Hound at his back on missions; his team doesn't feel quite the same without them there.

"Let us know if you ever need us, taicho." Hound suddenly says, and Sakumo blinks in surprise at the non sequitur. "Yuki-nii and I will help you however we can."

"Ah... thank you?" Sakumo scratches his head, "I appreciate the sentiment."

Hound hums in a noncommittal sort of way and smiles.)

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"Yukine-kun, this is Ayaka-chan."

'Ayaka-chan' is a pretty Uchiha chuunin from the Main Family, who is sweet and soft-spoken in a way that not many kunoichi manage to retain after years of being exposed to the harsh ninja world. Yume is the one who introduces the two to each other, who hovers anxiously by the doorway as the two are left alone together to... talk.

... To be fair, she is not the only one pressed up against the doorway eavesdropping. Amane and Mikoto are joined by Masato shortly afterwards, and Yume is in fact the last to join them—when she steps out of the room and slides the door shut, the three of them are already piled together, ears pressed tightly to the rice-paper windows.

Yukine had not been amused at their antics after the first 'date,' though there was a wry smile playing at the edge of his lips.

.

Rare are the times that Yukine and Amane do not take missions together, but it happens on occasion, and now that ANBU work is winding down and Yukine trails after Ayaka more often than not, Amane takes solo missions more and more often.

But there are times when there are no solo missions available, and she takes a team mission instead. It is on one of these occasions that she finds herself on a team serving under Orochimaru, the sole Sannin remaining in the village.

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(Orochimaru knows that people are scared of him. Scared of his looks, scared of his strength, scared of the way he acts. Things had been better when Tsunade and Jiraiya had been here with him, when they served as a sort of buffer between him and the rest of the village, but they are not here anymore, and Hiruzen-sensei is far too busy with his duties as Hokage for trifle matters like these.

It hurts, this caution and isolation, and resentment coils and festers in his heart. He is loyal to Konoha, just as they are –why can't they see it?

It is for this reason that he buries himself deeper and deeper into his research, trying to blot out everything around him–

He hisses in annoyance, spinning and letting Kusanagi sing through the air. There is a brief millisecond of resistance when the blade bites into flesh, but it is easy enough to dispatch of the shinobi who hadn't moved fast enough to dodge.

"Why won't you die, you monster?!" One of them screams, and Orochimaru remembers the same word falling from the villagers' lips when they think he isn't looking. Freak. Abomination. Monster.

The insult hits a little too close to home and he stumbles, and the shinobi takes his chance to lunge and–

–fall, eyes wide and mouth open with a kunai stabbed into the back of his neck.

The kunoichi lands soundlessly on top of the corpse, yanking out her kunai and looking up. There is a flicker of shock in her eyes when she sees him, as if she hadn't realized that it had been Orochimaru that she had just helped, followed by a quicksilver flash of something fearful, and it burns, this distrust that he has done nothing to earn.

Later when the battle is over, however, she is the only one of his squad to approach him and ask if he requires any healing, any sort of first aid before they move on.

It doesn't exactly soothe any of the festering resentment coiled in his heart, doesn't soothe any of the hurt and rage, but it... helps.

It helps.)

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"Ama-chan?"

"What is it, Yuki-nii?"

The young man crosses the room in a few steps and sits down in front of his sister. "I heard you went on a mission with Orochimaru-san lately. How... how are you?"

"I'm fine." She sets aside the paralytic she uses to coat her weapons in and glances up at her brother. "What are you implying, Yuki-nii?"

"Nothing," Yukine says. "But... be careful around him, alright? His experiments, they... worry me."

"Don't worry, Yuki-nii." The girl laughs, "His experiments worry me, too."

The young man does not look particularly reassured.

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("No more solo missions?")

It's a familiar voice that Orochimaru hears at the missions desk. He glances over and sees a familiar raven-haired kunoichi standing there, arms crossed and a dangerous look starting to enter her eyes as she looms over the table.

"N-Not at the moment, anyways." The poor chuunin on duty stutters bravely. "Uchiha-san, the least amount of personnel required for the missions that we currently have requires two people minimum, so I can't in good conscience just—"

Uchiha?

A flicker of interest stirs in Orochimaru's chest. Uchiha. Sharingan. A doujutsu that can copy any and everything it sees. The ultimate key to learning all jutsus.

"We'll take it," the girl stiffens in surprise, and Orochimaru forces down the hurt that is all but instinctive at this point.

This isn't a person, a comrade, he tells himself. It's an object. A subject. Something to be studied on the field.

Orochimaru smiles at the hapless chuunin, whose back goes ramrod straight. "Two people, right?" He inquires lightly.

"Y-Y-Yes."

To her credit, the Uchiha girl recovers quickly and manages to smile at him. It is much less threatening and much more amiable than any smile Orochimaru has ever succeeded in mustering to his face.

"It will be a pleasure to work with you again, Orochimaru-san."

Again? Well, she does look familiar...

"I was part of that team you led on the mission to Water Country last time—it was a pretty large group, I'm not surprised you don't remember me. My name is Uchiha Amane.")

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"Is it that fascinating?" The girl asks, and her pale-skinned companion nods.

Her eyes glow Sharingan-bright in the darkness. A single blink, and the red streaks fade to dull black again.

"Why?" she asks. There is something apprehensive in her voice, perhaps, but it is not judgmental. It is more curiosity than anything else, really.

"The Sharingan is a doujutsu that grants its user the power to replicate what they see. Is that not interesting to study?" Orochimaru questions, and the girl shakes her head.

"Why not the Byakugan, then?"

"The Byakugan is strong and increases one's field of vision, but my goal is to learn all the jutsu I can. For that, it would help to first understand how the Sharingan works in its memorization abilities. Perhaps I will find something there," he replies.

"Do you want the Sharingan for yourself?"

Orochimaru freezes, his body going impossibly still.

"... Is that what you think of me? You think that I want to steal your eyes?"

"Well," the girl says, "I think it's a good thing that you do not appear to want to, judging by that reaction."

She sounds absurdly satisfied.

"I think," she pushes off the tree and stands to her feet. "I wouldn't mind going on more missions with you in the future, Orochimaru-san."

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Yukine and Ayaka marry each other that summer. Mikoto is officially betrothed to Fugaku. Amane continues to avoid any and all of her possible suitors from the Clan, much to the elders' eternal ire and Yukine's eternal amusement.

"You can't escape this forever," he says in good humor.

"Watch me," she replies.

Yume throws up her hands in exasperation, and Mikoto laughs.

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Kusa is the first, followed by Taki.

One by one, minor villages begin rising, revolting against the control held by the Five Great Villages. There has been an increase in missions calling for shinobi, as people become used to calling on ninjas to get the job done. Minor villages have seen an increase in missions, an increase to their income, and an increase to their military power. They are no longer content to remain sidelined, minor villages. No longer.

Konoha eventually receives intelligence reports of Iwa offering an alliance to Kusa, offering an even split of both land and resources should they turn on Konoha with Iwa's backing –and this cannot be allowed to stand.

So naturally, there is a mission sent to sabotage this budding alliance before it can form.

A team led by one Hatake Sakumo.

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"Yuki-nii, what happened?"

"Taicho messed up." Gone was the calm, collected visage that Yukine normally portrayed. His face is twisted into a scowl as he paces up and down the length of the room. Amane watches worriedly from the side, wringing her hands. She had only recently returned from another mission with Orochimaru, only returned to find the village in an uproar. *"Taicho fucking messed up."*

"Yuki-nii!"

"This mission was important!" Yukine's hands twist at his sides. "We weren't supposed to fail! We already had the negotiations for their alliance in our hands –taicho was holding it in his hands. So what if Kusa's forces came earlier than expected? We were already dressed as Kusa-nin; Iwa would've turned on them directly after they killed us! And what does taicho do? Taicho fucking comes back for us and tries to get us out in the middle of a full-scale melee battle and *who the hell doesn't recognize Konoha's White Fang?*"

"Yuki-nii, calm down!" Amane reaches out for her brother. "Taicho saved your *life!*"

"He shouldn't have!" Yukine whirls on his sister, eyes shining Sharingan-bright with fury. "Don't you understand, imouto? *Taicho just started a war on our doorstep!* Our whole purpose was to undermine the alliance between Iwa and Kusa, this debacle only strengthened it!"

"The war was already headed towards us, you can't blame it on taicho–"

"What part of war on our doorstep don't you understand?!"

"Taicho saved your life!"

"I'd rather die!" He spits back at his sister. "The alliance would've fallen through if Iwa had killed the real Kusa forces as well! Konoha would have Kusa as an ally in this war, instead of the current situation where Kusa is allying with Iwa! We're shinobi, we're all disposable! We exist to protect the village!"

"We exist to protect the people in the village! And if you've forgotten, you are one of the people of the village as well!" Amane counters, red eyes narrowing as something in her voice breaks. "... Why are you acting this way? Taicho just saved you, and you're–"

"Get out."

She stumbles back at the vehemence in his words, eyes widening.

"Yuki-nii—"

"GET OUT!"

.

(Orochimaru blinks in surprise when he sees her on his doorstep.

"Amane-san...?"

"Am I wrong?" Alarm bells go off in his head. Amane never, never cries –Uchihas never show weakness, Amane never shows weakness. For her to turn up in the middle of the night in front of his house, crying, is something nigh unthinkable. He pinches himself to make sure he is awake. "Am I wrong to think that taicho was right to abandon the mission and bring my brother home alive?"

Orochimaru connects the dots in a heartbeat.

"Hatake Sakumo?"

"Yuki-nii hates him," she wipes at her eyes ineffectually. "Taicho saved him and he... he..."

"Look," he says, sighing. "From the village standpoint, he made the wrong decision. We've lost Kusa as an ally, and Kusa's geographical positioning is invaluable in this war. It will be that much harder from here on out to counter Iwa. But... from the perspective of a captain, he did well in cutting his losses and bringing back his men safely. No one died on the mission, did they?"

"... Yuki-nii says he would've rather died."

"He only says that because he's alive right now and in a position to complain about it," Orochimaru refrains from rolling his eyes. "Amane-san, he feels guilty. He just failed an important mission and is at least partially responsible for Kusa allying with Iwa. It makes sense for him to lash out and pin the blame on his taicho like the rest of the village, instead of blaming himself like he should for his lack of skill—"

"Orochimaru-san!"

He bites his tongue and holds back an irritated sigh.

"Look," he says. "Just stop crying, will you? It's..."

It's unbefitting of you. It's making me uncomfortable. It's wrong.

"Sorry," she says, and gives a shaky laugh that sounds more like a strangled sob. "I just... Yuki-nii, we've never..."

Orochimaru raises an eyebrow, "Never had an argument with your brother?"

"We're twins," she shrugs, as if that explains everything.

It most certainly doesn't.

Orochimaru pinches the bridge of his nose.

"You live in the Uchiha District with your brother, don't you?" He states more than asks, but she nods anyways in confirmation. He sighs, stepping back and widening his doorway. "You can stay with me for now. We'll find you a place sometime this week, and you can go visit your taicho tomorrow or something."

"Taicho!" Her eyes suddenly widen, and she looks to him in panic. "How long has it been since the mission? Do you know how taicho is doing?"

"A week?" Orochimaru thinks for a moment and shrugs, "I haven't been keeping track. And I certainly don't keep tabs on Hatake-san, he's more of Jiraiya's acquaintance than mine—"

"I'm going to visit taicho now."

"It's two in the morning, Amane."

Orochimaru blinks when he finds himself staring at a swirl of leaves landing on his suddenly-empty doorstep.

... Amane is... she is, perhaps, the only person outside of his team who looks at him and treats him like another person, for all of her initial fear of him. And for all that he had been intent on treating her as he would a subject of study for her Sharingan eyes, she did make for good company. She actually seemed to understand what he was saying when he talked to her about his research as well, and...

...

Alright, so he might be a bit worried about her in her current state.

Orochimaru sighs and slips into a shunshin as well.)

.

The room is silent. Eerily so. Amane slips in through a window after dismantling the traps and ghosts over the floorboards without a sound, turning the corner and—

Moonlight splaying over shadows.

Blood sinking into wood.

A fresh corpse lying on the ground.

Hatake Sakumo is sprawled there with a sword in his stomach, still and unmoving.

"Amane—"

The girl blinks numbly, unresponsive to the pale-skinned man who calls out her name and hisses upon catching sight of the corpse behind her. She blinks. Once, twice, thrice.

Then her eyes flicker scarlet and bloom.

"Izanagi."

.

(Sakumo raises the sword in his hands, frowning at the phantom pain in his stomach before he has even stabbed himself, and—

"Hatake!"

He pauses. That is... Orochimaru's voice.

... Orochimaru's voice?

Wait, what is Orochimaru doing in his home?

"Taicho," something collides into him and knocks away the sword in his hands. He finds himself flat on his back, staring at the ceiling. "Taicho, you can't do this, please don't do this—"

"What?" Sakumo manages, trying to get a good look at —Amane? Amane was here as well? The thing that had latched around his midsection and was now babbling incoherently was—

"Hatake, you are an idiot." There is something cold and freezing in the rage that colors Orochimaru's tone, as the yellow-eyed man towers over him and glares. "What on earth possessed you to commit suicide?"

"I..." he falters, because Orochimaru isn't wrong, but... how does he know? Why would he care? Why are they here? Amane is more understandable because she is Hound, and Hound is part of his pack, but—

"Please don't die, taicho." Amane says, and pulls back to smile tentatively at him, before parroting his own words to him. Words that Wolf had once spoken to self-destructive Jackal and Hound. "Family, friends... Don't you have anyone to live for?"

His breath catches.

The words that punch him in the gut are not the only reason for it.

There is a Sharingan that spins brightly in Amane's right eye, but her left is blank and glassy and crying tears of blood.)

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Yukine stares at his sister.

The girl stares back at him. One eye is covered by an eyepatch, and her skin has gained an unhealthy pallor overnight.

"... Why did you save him?" he finally asks.

"Taicho is a good man, Yuki-nii," she replies. "He deserves to live. He deserves to watch his son grow up. He deserves to have a future."

"It's not supposed to turn out this way," he whispers, and his sister arches an eyebrow.

"What way? Do you want taicho to die, Yuki-nii? I know that my coordination is probably shot to hell now, but I can deal with fighting with only one eye."

"..."

"I'm moving out, Yuki-nii. I... I think we should talk about this when we're both calm, not... not as we are right now." Amane smiles faintly. "Take care, Yuki-nii."

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("Good to see you here, Orochimaru."

"Jiraiya. I trust that you haven't managed to make a mess of things yet?"

"Your words are kunai to my heart! Such faith you have in your old teammate—"

Minato staggers lightly, but nothing can stop the relief that blooms in his chest at seeing the Snake Sannin here. It means that there is a new deployment of shinobi here on the Northern warfront, and it is finally time for Jiraiya's troops to return home. Konoha.

"It's nice to finally meet you, Namikaze-kun. I've heard a great deal about you from Jiraiya."

He spins and almost trips over his own two feet. The one-eyed Uchiha woman laughs lightly.

"Rest well when you return to Konoha," she pats his shoulder. "Mikoto-chan says that Kushina-chan misses you dearly. So do your cute little genin, but probably not as much as your girlfriend. I think."

... She's not playing *fair*. Minato blushes and hears his sensei laughing at him as well.

"You're looking nice today, Amane-chan!" Jiraiya calls out gleefully.

The Uchiha's response is equally gleeful.

"My face is up here, Jiraiya. Look down again and I'll castrate you."

Well, there's no denying that this woman definitely knows how to deal with his sensei's perverted tendencies. Orochimaru smacks the white-haired Toad Sannin upside the head, and Minato smiles.)

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She is in the hospital when it happens.

There is something to be said for a ninja's senses that they know instinctively when they are in danger. Or perhaps it is because the sedative used on her isn't quite strong enough – because she wakes up in the middle of an operation and there are medics that she doesn't know around her and they are in the process of taking out her remaining eye.

"Don't struggle," says the heavily bandaged man who had been her father's friend back when he had been alive– "Administer more sedatives, and continue the operation."

Amane struggles to throw genjutsu after genjutsu over the medics advancing on her, and screams when they take out her eye.

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("Amane, what are you– Amane? Amane!")

"Orochimaru," the girl gasps, and reaches out at him. There's blood spilling everywhere, so much blood, and Orochimaru is immediately in the process of using what little medical ninjutsu he knows but it's not working–

"My eye," she coughs out a mouthful of blood. Orochimaru frowns and puts more chakra into sealing her wounds. "Don't... Don't bother. My eye. Take my eye... He'll be here soon."

"Who did this to you?" he hisses.

"Dan... Danzo." Amane mutters tiredly, "Was in hospital, and he... he got me. Used genjutsu to fool him, took my left eye instead... don't let him get my Sharingan, Orochimaru."

"What are you saying?" Very rarely does Orochimaru ever feel panic, true panic, but this is pushing the borderline and he–

"Took all I had to... escape," she turns her face toward him and tries to smile again. "He has Root. I won't live. Don't... don't give him my eye...")

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Amane lives long enough to speak with her brother one last time.

"Yuki-nii," she mutters. Orochimaru turns and leaves the room, allowing the siblings privacy in their final words to each other. "Don't... don't wanna die... again... hurts..."

"... Again?" he asks softly, too tired and too sad to be angry with her anymore.

"Mmhm," she says drowsily. "Drowned the first... time... ship sank... was... I was pretty, y'know? Karen. Was Karen Hart..."

Yukine is silent.

...

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"How funny," he finally says at length, as his eyes bleed into Mangekyo and he holds the cold corpse of his sister in his arms. "That's my name, too."

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AN:

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This fic is a challenge from Zuiyun, to see if it's possible to write a SI story without anything written directly from the SI's perspective. :3 You have no idea how many times I started slipping into the SI perspective while writing this, haha. Not too awkward to read, I hope?

In case no one gets it yet –both Yukine and Amare are Reincarnated!OCs. However, they were reincarnated from the same person. Yukine is the whole rationalization/logic part of the reincarnated OC, and Amare is more tied down by emotions. I don't think it exactly came out the way I planned it to... well, it sounded better in my mind, anyways. xD

Not sure if you can actually use Izanagi on another person, but for the sake of the story, just pretend you can. :D

There will be a continuation of this, just to show the 'ripple effects' stemming from Amare's actions, probably something set in the Naruto-canon-timeline? Not too certain about it yet, but I'll mark the story as complete when I get that up. Eventually. xD

Works inspired by this one

[Restricted Work] by [Mysana](#)

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