



Chapter 12

Return To The Valley Of Exile

A Temple Garden Fortress For The Uchiha University

In a high valley between two peaks just west of the old Uchiha Quarter, a mist covered garden complex comes into view of unorthodox travelers. Conveyed by Ishitara's jutsu, they arrive with a flurry of flickering lights and her signature koto playing, and take in the marvel of what they find. They appear on a temple garden plateau, where the central temple of a mountain temple garden complex might normally be, consisting of more garden than temple. Mostly small modest traditional wooden temples sparsely populate a series of monumental garden earthworks and irrigation systems, with the central temple plateau filled with nothing but garden and with no central temple. Shintaro arrives with Ishitara in the center with a blindfolded Naruto led by the hand by Hinata, with Himawari's wakizashi strapped to Hinata's side, and Himawari herself tethered to mommy's hoodie, arriving along with Sakura and Sarada, as well as Chocho and Yukai. Sarada stands there bearing her great grandmother's kusurigama rolled up somewhat and fastened to the back of a fanny pack behind her, with Chocho wearing her great grandmother's sansetsukon, a three-sectioned-staff in it's sling, hung diagonally over her right shoulder.

As they materialize and take everything in, they find an elaborate network of earthwork and stone terraces, with earthwork and stone archway aqueducts, all servicing and irrigating a vast system of self sustaining automatically irrigated temple herb gardens, each presided over by a modest temple structure, except for the central temple garden plateau, with no temple at all. Yukai takes off his sunglasses, to better take it all in.





- Yukai: Wow pops!... You undersold it!... You kept complaining about not having access to the wood style back then... So I thought that it wouldn't be up to your usual standards... But I think you did pretty good without it...
- Sakura: Hai!... I agree!... It would make an excellent site... for a shinobi university... an Uchiha University... That was the only thing Sasuke said that he cared about... before he took off with Boruto for Ryuchi Cave... that it was going to be an Uchiha University... run primarily by Uchiha... since the a big portion of it would be on Uchiha land... I don't think he cares about the rest... as long as he gets that part... I however... may be a bit more particular about further alterations to the Uchiha property going forward... You say you can build temple fortresses?... Go ahead then!... Although it seems as if your half way there already... Show me what you can do master temple fortress maker!... dazzle me!...
- Naruto: Ahgh!... Can't I peak just a little bit?...
- Shintaro: Iie!... No more peaking!... Delve deeper with your insight... focus in on the nature of everything around you... feel and observe all the varied forms of life... and natural energy... all around you... with your chakra sense... and of course carefully observe me as well... Even though you may not be able to copy things with a sharingan... By observing the performance of jutsu this way... you may gain enough insight to figure out how to do it yourself... or something like it... The more you observe with your insight... the more things you learn how to do... the faster you master senjutsu to a higher level... and the sooner you can stop bugging me about the blindfold... because it will be over then... Wakarimasuka?...
- Naruto: Hai!... Wakata!... Ya know!...





- Hinata: Well I may have to differ about that... If we're supposed to be making major decisions... about some hypothetical shinobi university... my husband will need to be able to see what he's agreeing to...
- Naruto: Hai!... Hai!... She's right!... Ya know!...
- Shintaro: Very well then... I'll offer a wife's exemption... for when your alone... And for now... lets just call it a temporary university project planning committee exception... for observation... not for paperwork!... Naruto!...
- Naruto: Actually... Shikamaru says I'm banned for life from doing any ordinary paper work... in any ordinary way... Apparently... whenever I handled my own paperwork... it was always filled with mistakes... that would require fixing... which would mean more paperwork... He even called me a 'Baca Kage bureaucrat'... And he's already nagging at me to learn your way... Mendocuse... Ya know...

Naruto slides off his blind fold, and adjusts his eyes a moment, to take in the sights.

- Naruto: Wow!... It really is already built!... Isn't it?...
- Shintaro: This is... as it was... more or less... as I left it... to leave for the investigation of the fall of Uzushio... a bit over grown from neglect... but thriving nonetheless!... Aside from the neglect... this valley here is probably much like the early days of Uzushio... before Uzushio... was Uzushio... back when it was known... as the Valley of the Shrines... or the Village of the Cradle Shrines... It was situated in a valley beneath the cliff face where the old Senju Monastery was built... before there even was an Uzumaki Clan... In fact this was how the Uzumaki Clan... was born... an accidental





byproduct of the commingling of the human flotsam and jetsam of the middle sea... with the Senju Clan... of the Land of Fire... within the cauldron of the maelstrom... that is the Island of Uzu... The Senju founded the original monastery as a training retreat... for war weary shinobi and friends of the Senju Clan... to refine and expand their knowledge and skills far away from the din of battle itself... and try to find some meaning... in otherwise meaningless death... by dedicating themselves to something more... But of course... monks are only human after all... And one by one... errant and randy monks would have to build temples dedicated to their chosen creed of some kind... but serving as shelter for the child of the monk's indiscretion... along with their mother of course... One by one... the Cradle Shrines as they were called... filled the valley below the old Senju Monastery... giving it it's original name... and giving birth to the Uzumaki Clan... as a result... Back when my hapless apprentice Might Dai and I built all of these smaller temples... I had not yet mastered the wood style by then... so we had to make all the temples the old fashion way... one by one... perhaps as penance for my failure to save my Phoenix Flower... I can do far more than that now... But I'm not so sure if dazzling is the way to go here... I would generally prefer to take something of a more naturalist and minimalist approach going forward... as I am quite proud of the work we did here... Dai and I... And the garden is thriving so well... in spite of neglect... It was meant it to serve some day as the temple training grounds of a new demon hunter order of Konoha... penance for other failures... as well as for the Phoenix Flower...

Sarada: What happened with the Phoenix Flower?... What happened with my great





grandmother?...

Shintaro:

I would love to tell you... better yet show you... But I feel that is a story for a more private showing... with my grandson present as well... I recognize that he can't be here because he and Boruto are getting to know the White Snake Sage... which is partially my doing... But he should be here as it is for this... But he seems to have made his wishes known... Although he should be back soon... you never really know with the White Snake Sage... She's been known to eat people that upset her... or feed them to her daughters... But I'm sure they'll be fine... In the mean time... at bare minimum it needs a pagoda... right here... where we stand right now... But there are some things you need to know... before we can begin...

Sarada:

Just not about the Phoenix Flower?...

Sakura:

Sarada!...

Shintaro:

Not for now... For now... we have to talk about the new pagoda here...as opposed to the new pagoda there...

Sarada:

I wasn't talking about the pagoda...

Sakura:

Sarada!...

Shintaro:

Well... I was... Speaking of which... pagodas are often not... just pagoda's... They can act as lightening rods... tuning forks... and antennas ... for the nexus zones where they reside... Like the one in the old Uchiha Quarter... and the one that I made in Senju Park... although the one in Senju Park had to off-center somewhat because cousin Hashirama marked it with a tree... even I can't build a pagoda over a tree... But they are both functioning markers... and potentially functioning antenna and access points... for the the vast and infinite metaverse... And I intend to create another one just





like it... right here... and connect the three of them up... amplifying all their power... and their reach... This valley here was already a minor nexus zone to begin with... by the time that I was sentenced to exile here by the five kage... for crimes against aristocratic propriety... I have already paid a visit to the Senju Pagoda earlier today... and have already placed the necessary fortifications and enhancements to bring it up to the standard of the Uchiha Pagoda... Once I create one here... and connect it to the others via the appropriate nexus lines... the setup will be complete...

Sarada: Sounds more like you're planning some ultimate weapon... rather than a University...

Shintaro: They are one and the same!... For what greater powers are there... than the truth... and knowledge... and the understanding that comes from them... and what you can do with them?... What... if any... greater weapon is there in pursuit of this power... than a University?... And what greater tool... for this University... than a metaversal access point... with theoretically unlimited access... to the infinite knowledge... of the vast and infinite metaverse it self?...

Naruto: What is... the Metaverse?...

Sarada: The metaverse... is a metaphysical cosmological construct of alternative plasma cosmology... In accordance with the principles of quantum mechanics... and the wave mechanics of light and gravity... It is a metaphysically emergent phenomenon... of the physical universe... an illusion of separation... born of phase separation... and the constructive versus destructive interference... of both light... and gravity... With constructive interference... everything is in sync... and so we coexist within





a common bright frame of existence... with the destructive interference of the phase cancellation... whether partial or complete... it nullifies existence... or what we are accustomed to think of as existence... either partially or completely... creating null zones of phase interference... AKA shadow zones... and shadow realms... Perfect phase cancellation is impossible... so the darkness itself can never be absolutely dark... but nebulous and confusing... Where we exist within a single resonant realm of light... among infinitely other harmonically resonant realms of light... versus the asymptotic singularity... of ultimate cancellation... of all light... The shadow realm... is where nothing can ever be truly absolutely dark and lost... but absolutely nothing can ever be clear... in a manner of speaking...

Shintaro: Wow!... You memorized that quick!... You must have been studying the space-time scroll that I gave your father the other day... I'm not use to hearing my own words read back to me... But I suppose I'll just have to get use to it...

Naruto: Constructive?... Interference?... How can interference... be constructive?...

Shintaro: Think of it like music Naruto... Even when musical notes are different from each other... they can still fit together... and partially resonate with each other... harmonically... as part of the same key... but without completely fitting with some notes from outside the key... but may be a part of another key... If you have an infinite number of notes... and an infinite number of keys that can be made with those notes... Then any one note can belong to any one... of an infinite set... of infinite keys... But if you jumble together all the notes... from all of the keys... then you end up with nothing but noise... That noise is the shadow realm... and the entirety of what you think





you know of... as existence... is but one key... of an infinite number of keys... one realm of light... among an infinitude...

Naruto: In finitude?...

Shintaro: Never mind... I'll probably just have to show you anyway... Firstly... we'll need to step aside for a moment so I can work... Ishitara...

Ishitara begins to play, and the entire group is transported with Ishitara's usual flare to a nearby hilltop temple overlooking the central temple plateau they were just standing on.

Shintaro: Very well then... First things first...

Shintaro takes out his ocarina and begins to play it again. As he plays, the wind picks up around him and he flies up into the air. Shintaro's voice is heard coming down from the sky, as he flies up and over then hovers over the central temple plateau.

Shintaro: First I will finish the network... and then I can arrange a proper demonstration...

Shintaro continues to play and wooden walls begin to spring up out of the ground of the central temple plateau, as an octagon floor plan pagoda begins to take shape. The pagoda rises to six levels, with the crest of the Uzumaki Clan carved into various surfaces, all over the pagoda, and the symbols for the words 'Sacred Cradle' carved above the door of every entry-level doorway. A ring of cherry blossom trees spring up around the Uzumaki Pagoda, and then they begin to spring up all over the valley, lining every canal and levy throughout the valley, with at least one or two by every temple and shrine in the valley.





Then a seemingly endless flurry of seal papers flies out from his loose sleeves, as his red hair flaps about animated by the wind. The various seal papers fly about to their various targets, including the entire surface of the Uzumaki Pagoda and multiple locations on every cherry blossom tree, and every temple and shrine in the valley, as they all begin to glow and pulsate. Simultaneously, back in Konoha, the surfaces of the every cherry blossom tree that Shintaro made, as well as the Senju and Uchiha pagodas, begin to glow and pulsate in sympathetic resonance with their Uzumaki counterparts, before the seal papers disappear into the surfaces where they landed, and the pulsating glow dies down to nothing everywhere. Shintaro flies over to the top floor of his new creation as he calls to Ishitara.

Shintaro: Ishitara?... Please bring the others over and join me will you?...

Ishitara plays them all over to the top floor of the Uzumaki Pagoda and joins Shintaro already sitting on the floor. Shintaro pulls out a small scroll and conjures up a large stack of meditation cushions, then gets up and grabs one for himself before sitting down on it, as everyone else begins to follow suit.

Shintaro: Can you feel that Naruto... the difference... in the feel of this place... both from your normal experience... as well as from just moments ago on this same spot... before the pagoda?...

Naruto: Well... There is this weird hum... Can anyone else hear that?... It's not loud but it's weird... ya know...

Shintaro: Chakra sense synesthesia...

Naruto: Sin S?...

Shintaro: Synesthesia... It is the rare cross connection of the senses within the mind...





Some brain injuries can cause the senses to be cross connected a bit... causing the patient to be able to hear smells... or taste sounds... When I was born blind... not only were my other senses augmented as compensation... my chakra sense was also augmented... and it bled over into my other senses... Not only could I see chakra... to take the place of my missing sight... but I could also smell it... I can probably smell trace chakra in the air... almost as good as a ninja hound... I can hear the effects of chakra in the air... whenever there is a sound produced by the use of chakra... as part of a jutsu... That is chakra sense synesthesia... What you are hearing now... is the result of your brain trying to make sense... of your chakra sense... in a way that you can comprehend... Put your blindfold back on and tell me... what else do you hear... or feel... or smell... no unnecessary commentaries on personal hygiene choices please... This is for training!...

Naruto: Well I do smell fudge... for some reason... Is that important?...

Shintaro: Well... It can be... Extreme and rare paranormal phenomenon... are often inexplicably accompanied... by the smell of fudge... No one knows why... Of course... more often than not... the smell of fudge... is just fudge... which reminds me...

Shintaro reaches into his messenger bag, and pulls out a small bag of fudge, and tosses it to Chocho.

Shintaro: I almost forgot that I brought these for you... just in case...

Chocho: Ooooh!... You always know I want... domo granpa!...

Shintaro: What else do you sense?... anything at all?...





Naruto: Well... When I touch the floor... or any part of this pagoda... or the one in the Uchiha Quarter... I feel this small vibrating tingling sensation... Is that normal?...

Shintaro: Who's to say what is normal for you in terms of how your mind chooses to make sense of things... Only you can interpret... how your insight appears to you... in a manner of speaking... But I can tell with my own insight... and with my training and experience... that what you are feeling and hearing... is how your mind is making sense... of the sensations of sympathetic resonance... within the trace chakra all around you... permeating these pagoda... themselves resonating... with the resonance of the nexus zones that contain them... connected... amplified and augmented... by my own devices... to serve this planet... not just this university... or any one clan... Try infusing some of your sage mode chakra into the pagoda... lightly... just to connect with it... to resonate with it... What do you sense or feel then?...

Naruto lowers his hand down to touch the surface of the floor next to his cushion, and begins to lightly infuse chakra.

Naruto: I think... I think I can see... that nexus thing... over this pagoda... and the others... and connecting them... and Mount Myoboku?... I think I can see Mount Myoboku!... and the connection that geezer sage put in my koi pond... I can see my koi pond from here!... And they're connected to a well... here on this plateau... and to these pagodas... I think I can see the whole network!... Ya know!...

Shintaro: Good... Now stop doing that!...





Naruto abruptly stops infusing his chakra, and jerks his hand up off the floor.

Shintaro: In time I will teach you more about that... But for now... Keep in mind that these networks... are naturally two way streets... unless they are artificially made to be otherwise... A signal of some kind... made of chakra... can be detected by other sensitives... from elsewhere within the same network... They are not private... by default... The toads however... keep and maintain their own private network of travel conduits... which now includes your koi pond... and has included the well on this plateau... since long before I was even born... In time... if you learn how to travel as the toads do... you could just take your koi pond portal to Mount Myoboku... or to this very plateau... But special protections had to be put in place... to make these pagodas private... but only one way... Meaning this pagoda system can potentially access anywhere in the metaverse... if you have the energy and the coordinate markers... but is closed off... as far as the rest of the metaverse is concerned... for now at least... But like I said before... there are no guarantees of this...

Sarada: Can't they just be closed off entirely?... or made completely private?... Why take the risk?...

Shintaro: Because it can never be closed off entirely... and these are not the only ones... the vast majority of which are unknown and unmarked... not to mention unsealed... Even if they can't get in here... they can get in somewhere else... as long as they have the energy and the coordinate markers... But here we have an access point that we can control to some





extent... and thereby use to gain advantage... Ignoring the metaverse is simply no real long term solution... However... going out into it... to explore it with eyes open... but with home and hearth protected... then that may yet provide salvation... in a manner of speaking... or at least the knowledge of whatever actual options there may be... in a vast and infinite metaverse... Ignorance is not bliss... Knowledge is power... and ignorance... is slavery... In our case... the enslavement by the Otsutsuki eventually... if nothing else... The shinobi of this world are beyond unprepared... for what is coming for them... Hence the need for this Uchiha University... and these pagodas... as it's primary assets... it's weapons... and it's path of discovery... and preparation for potential salvation...

Sakura: Salvation seems like a tall order... Education and training maybe... But... the exploration of matters having to do with the Otsutsuki... that seems like a matter more for the alliance... than a university...

Shintaro: No doubt the alliance will have to be involved... by practical strategic necessity... as will the feudal lords... by unavoidable political reality... But the mission and purpose of this University... cannot be separated from the purposes and interests of the alliance... in the protection of this planet... nor from the purposes and interests... not to mention the reach... of the feudal lords... in their basic desire to maintain what they have... if nothing else... Make no mistake... This will be an extensive... expensive... and unavoidably complicated endeavor... I can only provide my knowledge and power... as well as a considerable fortune... in order to finance the endeavor... the rest is up to you lot... I can only explain to you why it is necessary... and this is the minimum necessary... in order to prepare... And





the pagodas may also serve other purposes... purposes of a more esoteric nature... as well as more personal...

Sarada: More personal?... What do you mean?... Is this some angle?...

Shintaro: No angle... inspiration and enlightenment... but no angle... for the most part...

Sarada: Inspiration and enlightenment?...

Shintaro: Allow me to demonstrate... in a way that may also satisfy some of your curiosity... about your great grandmother... my Phoenix Flower... Uchiha Mikono... Shikigami is a tool with many profound and powerful uses... many of them forbidden... like the Reanimation Jutsu... itself an evolved corruption of the traditional techniques of the onmiogi of Uzushio... Which I will now demonstrate... with the aid and the power of this site... and this pagoda...

Shintaro conjures up a small piece of lightly glowing paper within his palm, then the paper unfolds into a larger piece of paper before it stops glowing, then Shintaro lightly tosses the paper over to Sarada.

Shintaro: Bloody your own palm... with your own blood... and press it down upon the paper... infusing chakra into it as you do... same as the summoning jutsu... Then pass the paper back to me... And observe carefully...

Sarada does as instructed, then tosses the paper back to Shintaro. Shintaro places the piece of paper on the floor and performs series of hand seals, then places his fingers down over the top of Sarada's bloody hand print. The paper begins to glow again, this time with a purple





glow, of a purple static discharge, covering the piece of paper in the same electric purple aura. Copies of the paper begin to rapidly materialize over the original, covered in the same electric purple aura, as they fly around in a circle in front of Shintaro, Sarada, and the others, until they converge and condense into a human female form. The female figure takes on more and more material, and more and more color, until the figure of no less than the Phoenix Flower herself, Uchiha Mikono, as she first appeared to Shintaro when they first met, but without the anbu crow mask, stands before a speechless Sarada, and begins to speak.

Mikono: Well... Mr. Snowballs... What have you dragged me into this time...

Shintaro: Introductions... my Phoenix Flower... This is Uchiha Sarada... your great granddaughter...

Mikono: Great granddaughter?!?... My child lived?!?...

Shintaro: Ai... Mikono... Ai... Our daughter Mikoto... is no longer with us anymore however... But your grandson Sasuke is alive and well... with a family of his own... his daughter Sarada here... and another child on the way... None of which I can claim any credit for assisting... I must confess... But we don't have time for that now... Your shikigami reanimation is only temporary... And I brought you here to assist your great granddaughter... in mastering your old weapon... And you can get to know each other while you're at it...

Mikono: Sounds wonderful!... Sarada is it?... You look like an old picture of my mother... when she was your age...

Sarada: And you... look just like the family pictures... of my grandmother Mikoto...

Shintaro: Chocho... why don't you run along with Sarada and Mikono... and use your dancing lightening rod... and give my Phoenix Flower an opponent to





show off with... for Sarada's benefit...

Mikono: You're getting rid of me already?... Is there another woman?... Is she cute?... Are you cheating on her with me?... Kinky as ever... eh?... Shintaro?...

Shintaro: Mikono!... There is no other woman... not any more... I was married and widowed already now for over decade... Chocho here is my granddaughter... and Sarada's cousin... Besides... like I said... time for this jutsu is limited... And once Sarada learns this jutsu... I'm sure that I'll be seeing more of you... in a manner of speaking...

Sarada: Can't you do this for your self?...

Shintaro: I do not have the blood... of my Phoenix Flower's descendants... the way you do Sarada... But keep in mind... the further away you go from the nexus zone's center... the more this jutsu will weaken... and won't be able to be maintained... And should you attempt this jutsu in the future... you will also find it difficult to perform at all... let alone maintain... the further away you are from any nexus zone center... away from where it will always be the easiest... in the very center... You should also be able to show your father later... under the right circumstances... But I warn you... it is a very demanding jutsu in terms of chakra... And your ancestor summoning shikigami clone... will only have as much strength as you can give it yourself... and only as much life... So don't stray too far...

Sarada: Hai!... Wakata!... Ancestor?...

Mikono: Hai!... Icu!...





Chocho, Sarada, and Mokono all take the fast way down out the window, leaving Shintaro behind with the rest of the university project planning committee. Shintaro's head then suddenly falls as he cups his face in his hands for a moment before continuing.

Shintaro: I didn't think it would be hit me this hard... Do you think my Phoenix Flower noticed?... I didn't want to detract from Sarada's time with her...

Sakura: A likely story... But keep your secrets about the Phoenix Flower for now... as long as one of you tell it all to my husband and daughter at some point... I'm more interested in that jutsu that you just used to do that... to begin with!... You said that was shikigami!... It looked like the lightening style... But why was it purple?... I've seen that before... But what does that?... Kakashi does that with his Chidori these days... But it wasn't always that color...

Shintaro: That purple color as you call it... is a telltale sign of the shadow lightening style... The purple that you see is just the visible collateral side effect of the invisible shadow lightening... It is something I can do in spite of not having an affinity for normal light style version... what you would think of as the normal lightening nature chakra... which is difficult to do... but not impossible... I mastered it for it's speed more than anything... But I believe Sarada may have a talent for it... Sasuke as well... I could have made a more longer lasting version of the technique using senjutsu... But this way... Sarada could copy the jutsu potentially... and maybe even perform it already... Who knows?... We shall see what we shall see... however we shall see it... in a manner of speaking... I can show you the more powerful version... You might even be able to copy it yourself... with your new fancy





eyes... Sakura... But you will still have to master senjutsu... in order to perform it... This is part of the toad sage water style shikigami... that master Fukasaku wants to teach Naruto... among other things...

Shintaro begins to perform the jutsu again. This time, after the glowing paper unfolds in his palm, he clasps the glowing sheet of paper in between both hands for a few moments as blood begins to ooze out from the pores on his hand to cover one side of the paper, and places the paper down on the floor, revealing a blood red hand print on the paper. Then, instead of the electric purple glow of before, a greenish blue glow takes over as the paper begins to emit a fine mist, into which a number of paper copies materialize, forming out of drops of water flowing up from the original paper on the floor, and condensing above it. More and more water flows out of the paper on the floor, forming more and more paper copies, as all the water and the paper begins to take the shape of an elderly human man with long white hair and a long white beard, wearing the gray robes of a monk, before solidifying as the greenish blue glow dies down to nothing.

Shintaro: Naruto... This is my grandfather... your great grandfather... Uzumaki Ashina... Grandfather... This one over here... is your great grandson... Uzumaki Naruto... and that is his daughter... your great great granddaughter... Uzumaki Himawari... Naruto is Kushina's son... You remember me telling you about him?... sodesune?...

Ashina: Of course I remember!... I'm dead!... Not senile!... One of the few benefits of being dead... is that in the afterlife... we all have perfect recall... because that is what the afterlife is for... Baca!... Don't you remember what I taught you?...





- Shintaro: Ai... grandfather... Ai... I did not mean to doubt... only to avoid taking anything for granted... Naruto here... is a sage of Mount Myoboku...
- Ashina: Mount Myoboku!... Why didn't you teach him?...
- Shintaro: They got to him first... I'm helping him with his training now though...
- Ashina: Very well then... I suppose that will have to do... That is the biggest drawback to being dead... You can remember everything... But you can't do a thing about any of it... only watch... if your lucky... and hope for the best... and hope you can stand the memory... of the part that you played in how it all turns out...
- Shintaro: Ai... Grandfather... Ai... This young lady with the koto... is my own youngest daughter... Ishitara... and you just missed my granddaughter Akimichi Chocho... and my great granddaughter Uchiha Sarada... Sasuke's daughter... This is his wife... Sarada's mother Sakura... She is a gifted medical ninja... a student of my apprentice... lady Tsunade... in the medical arts... and now mine in senjutsu as well... as is Sarada...
- Ashina: Well... That's all very well then... How is your fuinjutsu Naruto?... Better than average I hope...
- Shintaro: I'm afraid Naruto here is not exactly up to snuff... on the clan specialty... yet... But I'm working on him... His son Boruto shows much more promise and skill in fuinjutsu... according to his teachers... and more skill with shikigami certainly... However... I should explain something... as he and my grandson Sasuke... are currently making their way through Ryuchi Cave... to apprentice with the White Snake Sage...
- Ashina: The White Snake Sage?!?... Why aren't you teaching them?...
- Shintaro: Sasuke apprenticed with an apprentice of the White Snake Sage... and then





young Boruto apprenticed with Sasuke... And you know how the White Snake is... The dibs rules are what they are... after all...

Ashina: Ai... That they are... Well at least they're with the White Snake... If they survive... they should become very impressive sages...

Hinata: If they survive?!?...

Shintaro: Grandfather... This is Uzumaki Hinata... She is Naruto's wife... Boruto's and young Himawari's mother...

Ashina: It was not my intention to gratuitously frighten you Hinatasama... These are just the realities of senjutsu training... by any tradition... including that of Mount Myoboku... and the Uzumaki... Although... the White Snake does have a reputation for eating problem students... But they'll probably be fine...

Shintaro: Most likely...

Naruto: Sasuke is going to be with him... He'll be fine... ya know...

Hinata: He had better be!... for your sake!... since you signed off on this...
Narutokun!...

As Hinata chastises Naruto, the training of the young kunoichi seems to be going well with the Phoenix Flower, out on the ground just outside the Uzumaki Pagoda. Chocho spars with the Mikono paper clone and Mikono's kusarigama, as Sarada watches and carefully studies her every move.

Sarada: Surely you must be joking!... He really did that?... That's so ridiculous!...
You must have been so mortified!...

Mikono: Ai... Ai... I was... and not for the first... nor the last time... But that was a





highlight!... Eventually you'll see for yourself...

Chocho: I can believe it!... Based on some of the things mama says about granpa...

Sarada: Ancestor?...

Mikono: Please... call me Miconochan!... Mr. Snowballs may like to be called sensei... But I prefer Miconochan... It makes me feel more like I'm young and alive... as opposed to dead and rotten... even though I am...

Sarada: Hai!... Miconochan!... Are you... Were you really... Uchiha Madara's granddaughter?...

Mikono: Ai... for what it was worth... for better and for worse... and for everything in between... as Mr. Snowballs would say... It wasn't anything... that seemed like anything... other than a hassle... at the time... Still doesn't... I suppose... The association only ever isolated me... and made me a target... for my eyes... and for the reputation of Uchiha Madara... I lost dear friends... among the few that I had... because of that association... Then the only friends that I had left... were Tsunade... and the friends that I had with her by extension... until Mr. Snowballs came along... And we were never really friends... We went straight from being fierce tempestuous rivals... to being fierce passionate lovers... as if there wasn't any difference at all between them... We were like literal fire and ice... that don't mix easily... but makes lots of steam when they do... And that was us...

Chocho: Oi!... That reminds me!... You can show Sarada the Phoenix Flower Medusa!... Granpa showed us a little of that... from when you first met... But Sarada can copy it from you directly!...

Mikono: You like the Medusa?... Well kiddo... At least you have the hair for it...

Sarada: Ai... Chocho and Shintaro sensei helped out a little...





Mikono: Very well then... A command performance it is then... Mr. Snowballs may be the master magician... But I am the true artist between us... He'll even admit to that!... Stand back you two... and enjoy the show...

Chocho leaps over to where Sarada has been observing this whole time, as the Phoenix Flower begins to emit an aura of flame, especially around her hair, and begins to swing the black steel ball at the end of her kusarigama chain, around in a circle in front of her, as it begins to emit the same aura of flame. The Phoenix Flower herself begins to levitate slightly above the ground, as her hair begins to extend downward and she raises her spinning kusarigama above her head still spinning, gradually letting out the length of it's chain, until it's extended out to it's maximum length, as Mikono hovers out a bit higher over a large pond next the central temple plateau. Mikono's hair begins to braid itself into flaming braided snakes, as it continues to extent downward, covered in flames. The braided flaming snakes begin to shoot an all out rapid fire assault of flame enshrouded blackened steel shadow clone shurikens, against the large pond below her. As the flaming shadow clone shurikens rapidly bombard the pond water, massive amounts of steam are generated, even to the point where the pond water starts to boil. Then all the shurikens stop, and the flames from her spinning kusuarigama chain suddenly shoot up forming a spinning funnel of fire, up, over, and down against the defenseless pond, generating even more steam, and boiling the water even more. Then the funnel stops, and she starts swinging her flaming Kusarigama around in a circle by her side, as her hairs floats upwards still flaming. Mikono then whips her Kusarigama chain down in the direction of the pond closer to where Sarada and Chocho stand observing, extending the chain length as she does, with shadow clone chain links springing up within the chain, as it extends, thus extending it, with the blackened steel ball at the end engulfed a ranging fireball. As it hits the pond, a





massive steam explosion erupts where it hits, drenching Sarada and Chocho, in hot steam and water droplets.

Mikono: How's that kiddo?... Is that enough medusa for you?... Or do you want more?...

As Mikono says this, she hovers over and floats above the heads of the observing kunoichi, but then begins to peel away, as bits of paper peel off of her and she realizes it.

Mikono: Sumimasen kiddo... But it looks like that's it for today...

Sarada: Mikonochan?!?...

Chocho: Is that really it?... That was just getting really good!...

Sarada: Maybe not...

Sarada replicates the procedure that Shintaro showed her step by step as she generates the paper in her hand using the Skin Paper Peel technique, just as Shintaro had demonstrated for her. She lightly cuts her hand on the blade of her kusarigama, before using the blood on her hand to put her bloody hand print on the paper, infusing chakra as she does. Then she performs the identical series of hand seals that Shintaro had performed before slapping her hand back down on the sheet of paper, again infusing chakra as she does. All of the crackling, popping, and snapping, paper copying and flying happens as before. But as the Phoenix Flower's form begins to solidify, the various papers the make up her artificial body begin to peel away as the jutsu begins to fail, before Mikono says one last thing.

Mikono: Not quite kiddo... Better luck next time... Be seeing you...





Chocho: Aaah!... That was so close!... Is that it?...

Shintaro: Mind your chakra!... That was pretty good for a first time!... But mind your chakra!... I told you!... That's a demanding jutsu!...

Shintaro's voice calls down to them from the top of the pagoda, where everyone seems to have been watching most of the show.

Sarada: I will get this!...

Sarada then passes out from the exertion, as her mother and the others look on.

There Is No Alone!
Forever Never Ending!
There Is No Escape!
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