



Chapter 13

I'll Be Seeing You

In All The Old Familiar Places

Sarada awakens to see Chocho and a strange old man with long white hair and a long white beard staring down at her, as she is sprawled out on a pair of meditation cushions in the top floor of the Uzumaki Pagoda.

Sarada: Nani?!?...

Chocho: She's awake!... Sarada!... Meet our dead ancestor!... Ashina!...

Ashina: Konichiwa!... Young shinobi!...

Sarada: Nani?!?... Ashina?!?...

Instinctively, reflexively, and without thought, Sarada unleashes her Mangekyo Sharingan, and engulfs the shikigami paper clone in the black unquenchable shadow flames of the Ameterasu. As Ashina burns, inexplicably, Ashina starts to burn less and less, as the supposedly unquenchable flames of the Ameterasu, are slowly quenched until fully doused.

Sarada: Nani?!?...

Shintaro: Even the the supposedly unquenchable flames of the Ameterasu... can be countered by powerful enough water style... powered by senjutsu... as is the toad sage shadow mist style shikigami clone... My apologies... grandfather... My great granddaughter Sarada... has recently underwent a trauma... and now has the Mangekyo Sharingan... but does not quite have a





handle on it yet...

Ashina: That's quite all right... I can't feel it... It is both a benefit... and a draw back... of being dead...

Sarada: Dead?!?...

Ashina: Ai... Quite so... and for many decades...

As Sarada regains her composure, she realizes that Boruto and her father have temporarily returned from from Ryuchi Cave, with her father appearing somewhat bruised and battered, but struggling to contain his pride and maintain his aloofness.

Sarada: Papa?... Boruto?... When did you get back?...

Boruto: Just now... The White Snake Sage is kinda weird... But she knows all kinds of shikigami... We haven't even started with senjutsu yet... We spent the first day... hanging out with Sasuke's brother Itachi the Crow!... and the Black Knight!... But we have to go back later... Because Sasuke got banged up in a sparring duel with the Black Knight!...

Sasuke: Boruto!... I don't mind them knowing about my brother... But going forward we can't talk about Itachi carelessly... especially his meeting and travel habits... for his protection... Compartmentalize the information... Speak vaguely about it... if at all... Get in the habit of it... Avoid all detail unless absolutely necessary... especially the who's... the wheres... and the whens... Consider this part of your training... And consider it a mission in terms of what we may learn about the resistance... I'll tell you all about it myself later Naruto... if you don't mind...

Naruto: Ai... Ai... That's fine... Ya know... But... Is your brother really alive?...





Sasuke: Ai... I'll tell you about it later... But suffice to say for now... my brother Itachi has been reincarnated... in a manner of speaking... And is now a leading figure in the resistance against the Otsutsuki in his new life... Eventually you'll probably get to meet him yourself... He was planning on coming by here some time... But I don't even know when myself... by design... and wouldn't say even if I did... by necessity...

Naruto: Ai... Ai... Wakata... ya know...

Sasuke: One thing you should should know now Sarada... about your uncle Itachi... is that you have already met him... by another name... Do you remember Karasusama?...

Sarada: Karasusama?... Uncle Itachi?... is Karasusama?...

Sasuke: Ai... Do you remember?... You probably know the new Itachi better than I do... He had to stop visiting you when you were younger... because of his involvement in the resistance... I told him to stop being a stranger for our protection... But there is no telling where or when he'll show up and pay us a visit... for multiple reasons...

Sarada: Hai!... Wakata!... I just find it hard to believe but... by the standards of recent days... I suppose that's not that unusual a revelation... under the circumstances... Oi!... Papa!... I learned a new jutsu I want to show you!...

Sarada begins to perform the jutsu as before.

Shintaro: Now Sarada... I have every confidence in your ability to master that jutsu eventually... But you currently don't have enough chakra... And I have a more powerful version to show you... You can try again and show your father





later... after you've rested... I recommend... that you make your next attempt in the basement of the Uchiha Temple... The significance of the ground where it's located should aid in the performance of the justu... in time you should be able to perform the jutsu anywhere... But it is very demanding of chakra regardless... In the meantime... there is a more powerful form of the jutsu that I would like to show you... It uses the same sort of shadow lightening shikigami... as the one that I already showed you before... But this one requires the mastery of senjutsu to perform... This time we'll take a donation from your father...

Shintaro uses the Skin Paper Peel justu again. But this time the sheet of paper that forms and unfolds, is sheathed in an electric purple static glow as it does, before it dies down to nothing after forming the paper. Shintaro tosses the paper over to his grandson, who catches it and sets it down on the floor in front of him.

Sarada: I know this part... Smear some of your own fresh blood over your palm... and place your bloody palm print on the paper... infusing your chakra into the paper as you do so... Then toss it back to Shintaro sensei...

Sasuke dutifully complies, with bemused curiosity, as his daughter instructs him, then dutifully tosses the paper back to Shintaro. Shintaro places the sheet of paper down on the floor in front of him and starts to perform a series of hand seals, before his hands begin to glow all over with the same electric static purple glow. Then he places his palm down over the bloody palm print, and infuses all of the electric purple static into the sheet of paper as he does. As the sheet of paper takes on the electric purple aura, glowing purple paper copies appear and





multiply above the original sheet of paper, and swirl about, as a glowing electric purple dynamo begins to take the form of a woman in front of them. As the form solidifies, and takes on proper flesh tone and color, the purple glow dies down to nothing leaving the Phoenix Flower standing there before her grandson and everyone.

- Mikono: I'm back!... Did you manage it this time?... Or was it Mr. Snowballs?...
- Sarada: It was Mr. Snowballs!... showing off again... like you said... Papa!... This is the Phoenix Flower!... Although she prefers Mikonochan!...
- Mikono: Oh?... Sodesuka?... Is this my grandson?... He's quite handsome isn't he...
- Sasuke: Mikonochan?... My mother's name... was Mikoto... You look so much like her... or I suppose... it's the other way around... But... with all due respect to my grandmother... If you can do this... then I want see my mother now...
- Mikono: My daughter?!?... Hai!... My daughter!... You owe me that much at least Mr. Snowballs!... You have to!...
- Shintaro: Hai!... Hai!... I do... But to manage so much summoning... I'm going to have need for back up... Naruto... go back to that exercise from before... Infuse sage mode chakra into the pagoda again... Resonate with it... amplify it... and try to direct it to the shikigami clones present... to support them... and keep them going longer... Otherwise... I won't be able to keep them all going...
- Naruto: Yosh!...

Naruto begins to infuse his sage mode chakra into the pagoda as before. The pagoda and the shikigami clones all begin to take on a mild blue glow.





Shintaro: That's probably a bit too much... You only need to keep them going... not charge them up for battle...

The dim blue glow fades away, as Shintaro begins to perform the shadow lightening shikigami technique as before, conjuring up the purple static emitting paper out of his own skin and chakra. Then Shintaro tosses the paper to Sasuke, who repeats this part of the process with his still bloody palm, before tossing the sheet of paper back. Then, with a now familiar series of hand seals, and the accompanying electric purple dynamo of whirling shadow lightening shikigami, the figure and image of Uchiha Mikoto takes form and solidifies, as the purple glow fades away.

Sasuke: Mama?!?...

Mikoto: Sasuke?... What is going on here?...

Mikono: Mikoto desuka?... I'm your mother... I know it's weird... Trust me I know... given were both dead an all...

Mikoto: Both?... Dead?... Oh... no... Itachi!... No!... Itachi!...

Sasuke: Mama!!!...

Sasuke jumps off his cushion and rushes to comfort his mother's shikigami clone.

Sasuke: Mama!... It's okay!... Daijoubu desuyo!... Look!... This is Sarada!... She's your granddaughter!... And look here!... This is Sakura!... her mother!... She's currently pregnant with our second child!... a boy!... The future is bright for the Uchiha!... Mama!... Don't cry for the past mama!... Not even for Itachi!... Even Itachi has been reincarnated!... He is a hero now!... I will





introduce you!... I promise!... I will learn this jutsu myself!... And I promise you!... I will introduce you to him myself!... the first chance that I get!...

As Sasuke seeks to comfort his distraught mother, he begins to break down himself a bit, before catching himself, and struggling to restore his cool as Mikoto tries to comfort him instead.

Mikoto: Oh... Daijoubu desune... You needn't fuss over me Sasuke... Just knowing that you and your family are alright is all that I need to know... I was just taken a bit... by the shock of what I remembered... about what happened with Itachi...

Mikono: Who's Itachi?...

Sakura: Itachi... is a bit of a sensitive subject... for a more private setting... Might I suggest we take this down stairs?...

Sasuke: Hai!... Hai!... Downstairs!... I'll explain everything!... I swear!...

Mikoto: Don't swear at me Sasuke!... I'm your mother!... And you say your... my mother... eh?... Mikonosan?...

Mikono: Ai... Ai... But I only just got here myself... Why don't we go downstairs and you can tell me all about this Itachi... downstairs... And please... call me Mikonochan... right?... Saradachan?...

Sarada: Hai!... Mikonochan!... Hai!... I would like to hear this myself!...

Sasuke: Hai!... Hai!... I'll explain everything!...

Sakura: Icu...

Shintaro: Allow me to come along as well... to help explain things to my daughter...

Sasuke: You stay here... Shintaro sensei... This a matter for the Uchiha Clan... and





with all due respect grandfather... you're a bit of a complication... that I can't handle right now... Come mother... let me explain things to you... downstairs...

Mikoto: You're my father?... I thought you were just my doctor... My best friend Kushina brought me to you... You were her brother... did she know?...

Shintaro: No... She knew nothing... Because she wasn't allowed to know otherwise... I didn't want to burden you or her with the truth at the time... But I knew... The moment we met... I knew...

Sasuke: Please mother... We have limited time... Let me explain... downstairs...

Mikoto: Okay...

Naruto's concentration suddenly fails, and his shikigami sustaining infusion of sage mode chakra suddenly fails right along with it, causing all three shikigami paper clones to begin to fail and peel away.

Naruto: Aaagh!... No!... Things were just getting good... ya know!...

Sasuke: Mama!!!...

Mikoto: Sasuke!...

Mikono: Don't worry kiddo... We'll be back... That little one there has already got this jutsu down... right Saradachan...

Sarada: Hai!... Miconochan!... Hai!...

Sasuke: Mama!!!...

All the clones disappear completely, as Sasuke seems distraught.





- Sasuke: Bring them back!... Bring them back Now!...
- Shintaro: Now calm your self grandson... My nephew Naruto is not the only one at his limit at the moment... I just built a temple... performed major landscaping... and raised the dead on top of all that... We could all use some sustenance and rest... And you seem to be need of some medical attention... Might I suggest that we transfer this party to Choza's restaurant... And then we can make calmer plans... over better food... And I can introduce you to a taste of home... They have very authentic Uzu recipes... Tomorrow night... we can reconvene at the Uchiha Temple... better rested... and better fed... and better prepared to do this properly... Let me check you out... I have an apartment above Choza's restaurant... A private flophouse really... that Choza lets me use when I'm in Konoha... to keep stuff... Yukai probably spends more time there than I do... But mostly we just use it for storage... Why don't we regroup... and reassess... over at Choza's?...
- Sasuke: Ai... I'm starving... Your buying!...
- Shintaro: Ai... Ai... Of course... I have a standing account!... Ishitara... If we hurry... we should be just in time the evening dinner service...

Ishitara begins to play her koto again, and the entire group teleports to Choza's restaurant. As the group arrives, Kakashi and Konohamaru are sitting with Choza, and Shikamaru is sitting with Choji and his wife Karui.

- Choza: Oi!... Oi!... You know I'm always glad to see you guys... But he can't be bleeding in my restaurant... There are codes... You take that upstairs Shintaro... I'll have your order sent up...





- Shintaro: Come with me grandson... Sakura... We can treat your wounds upstairs without too much difficulty...
- Sakura: I'll take care of that myself thank you!... But I'm sure everyone would love to see this apartment of yours...
- Sasuke: Ai... You can give us a tour...
- Shintaro: It's not much... just the old bunk house for the live-in guards who used to guard the old warehouse... before Choza turned the place into a big restaurant and food pill factory...
- Choza: Oi!... Don't forget the brewery and distillery!...
- Shintaro: Of course not Choza... We'll be upstairs then... Yukai... Put in our order will you?... Give us a wide assortment... from the Uzu portion of the menu... They have very authentic Uzu recipes here... an old taste of home for my nephew... and my grandson... and assorted company... You know... the Akimichi are also originally from Uzu... like the Uzumaki... But migrated to the land of fire in greater numbers than the Uzumaki... originally... Why don't you join us Karui?... I don't think anyone would mind... if you stopped hating your father long enough to have a civilized extended family dinner...
- Karui: I'll take it under advisement... baca sennin...

Shintaro leads the assembled friends and family up the stairs past the kitchen, with Ishitara staying behind with her sister, Yukai, and Chocho, as the smells from the restaurant waft up two flights of stairs, to a small bunkhouse structure perched on top of the old warehouse building, with an open deck overlooking Konoha. The bunkhouse has a number of bunk beds built into the wall along the back, with book shelves and storage cabinets, filling in most of the space, themselves filled to brimming with books and scrolls, various jars and





gourds, causing the bunkhouse to resemble a more traditional doctor's office. In the center of the room sits a large square heated coffee table, on top of an even larger persian style rug, with an electric kettle sitting on the table, plugged into a small outlet in the center of the coffee table itself, next to some random tea cups. The table itself is surrounded by a number of meditation cushions on the carpet around it. Shintaro walks over and sits himself down on a cushion and motions for others to follow suit.

Shintaro: Dozo... Dozo... Please grab a cushion and make yourselves comfortable... There are more cushions in the back if you need any... In fact... if anyone is too worn out from the day's proceedings... there are bunks built into the back wall... made for a bigger crew than we have here...

As the assembled weary and worn out friends and family filter in and take in the sight, they all grab a cushion, and wait for the promised grub, while anticipating what may come next. Shintaro senses the need for more cushions, so he materializes a small scroll directly into his hand without reaching into his messenger bag, as Sarada once again notices. Shintaro then uses the small scroll to conjure up a two stacks of meditation cushions, enough for more than a full crew. Then the small scroll disappears back from whence it came without having to be put back in his bag, as Sarada takes careful notice again.

Sakura: Is this really your apartment?... Sodesuka?... Given recent experience... I expected something far more... weird and exotic...

Shintaro: Choza's Restaurant... is not permitted for the weird and the exotic... That's too expensive... too much overhead...

Choza: Normally... you would be right!... But if you're involved Shintaro... I'm





liable to get some new renovations out of it!... So be as weird and exotic as you like... Just don't bleed in my restaurant... I can deal with weird and exotic... I just can't deal with the bureaucrats...

Karui: Don't encourage him!... He's bad enough when he's trying to be careful!...

Choza and Karui chime in as they come up the stairs, carrying sake, tea, and assorted appetizers, along with the assistance of Ishitara, Konohamaru, and Yukai, as well as Kakashi, Shikamaru, and Choji. They all filter in and deposit the various party supplies, then grab various cushions and take their places gathered around the square heated coffee table and the large persian rug.

Shikamaru: I hope you don't mind me taking the opportunity... to invite ourselves to the party... If it helps... you can send the bill to Choji... I'm worried what might happen if I let you out of my sight for too long... How did the University planning go?... And should I even ask why Sasuke is all beat up?...

Shintaro: Planning went well for now... And you probably shouldn't ask... It's probably compartmentalized...

Shikamaru: Compartmentalized?!?...

Sasuke: I was sparring with the Black Knight... The bodyguard of my reincarnated older brother... Itachi the Crow... a leader of the resistance against the Otsutsuki Empire... I can't really say more... But you'll get an opportunity to ask him for yourself... But I can't possibly tell when by necessity...

Shintaro: Thus... compartmentalized... But I'm glad you're here... as I can now make some introductions that might help you get up to speed somewhat... if you're feeling a bit behind the curve... Naruto... Do you think you have enough





chakra and wherewithal... to summon your old master Fukasaku again?... I would like him to be a party to this conversation...

Naruto: Hai!...

Naruto summons his old master Fukasaku, materializing him on the persian rug next to him.

Fukasaku: Narutochan?... It's not that I mind... But if you going to summon me this much... perhaps I should move to Konoha... Perhaps I can stay in your koi pond... and you can feed me like a pet...

Shintaro: Sumimasen... Fukasaku sensei... I needed you here for a special introduction... of great importance to both you and Naruto... And I believe I have just enough chakra left to pull it off...

Shintaro pulls out a small sheet paper with seal formula inscribed upon it, and places it down upon the coffee table, then performs a series of hand seals, before placing his palm down upon the paper on the table, as it begins to glow an electric purple glow. Purple lightening arcs over and strikes at a spot in the center of the table next to the paper, assuming first an outline of some sort of small creature, then fully materializing, as the purple lightening completely dissipates, leaving behind the figure of a small brightly colored red and green tree frog. The small creature wears a pair of round rimed sunglasses, and a top hat with symbol for Mount Myoboku on the hat band, with a hook handled cane in one hand, and a gourd of sake in the other.

Tree Frog: Konbanwa!... baca normies!...





Shintaro: Naruto... Fukasaku... Believe it or not... this is Jiraiya...

Naruto: Ero Sennin?!?...

Fukasaku: I had a feeling... The great toad sage had another vision... that Jiraiyachan would return to us... as one of us... as one of our kind...

Sasuke: Itachi mentioned that Jiraiya had been reincarnated... He said that I wouldn't believe it... He was right...

Naruto: Is that really you Ero Sennin?...

Jiraiya: Ai... Naruto... It's me alright... And stop calling me 'Ero Sennin!'... I'm not even a sennin any more... not yet... at any rate... although the 'ero' part still fits... I have much better luck in my new life than I ever did before... even though I'm still a juvenile among my new people... And not just with the ladies... I'll have you know that I'm a renown poet... throughout multiple empires... And a performance artiste... when the mood hits... Even an Otsutsuki critic had to recognize me as... in his words... 'a literary cross cultural force to be reckoned with... to behold and despair!'...

Shintaro: That is no hype... Jiraiya is a genuinely high profile cultural figure... both within the Otsutsuki Empire... as well as the great rival powers... including the Great Amphibian Commonwealth... where Jiraiya has been born into effective royalty... as the son of the high priest... of the commonwealth's official religion... Between his artistic acclaim... and his effective diplomatic immunity... Jiraiya has become a very high profile... very popular... and very controversial figure... on the diplomatic and political side of the resistance against the empire...

Jiraiya: On this planet too... where I am known by my name from my new life... Mori... Jime Mori... of the Jime Clan...





- Himawari: Jime Morisan?... I remember you!... You were always hanging out in the garden... You said you were looking after mommy's garden... guarding against insects...
- Jiraiya: That was me... And I was eating insects at the time... I just couldn't stay away... I had to see how Naruto was doing... But Naruto was never home...
- Boruto: I always thought that Himawari was just making things up... or imagining them... I just thought she wanted my attention... like it was a game we would play...
- Hinata: Himawari asked me what I was paying Morisan... for guarding the garden...
- Kakashi: Are you really Jime Morisan?... the poet?... Jiraiya sensei?...
- Jiraiya: Ai... But perhaps if I were to take the form that I had at the book signing...

Jiraiya leaps off the table to land on a nearby cushion, then transforms into a human with bright red hair, wearing a shiny lime green tuxedo, suitable for a high school prom, while still wearing the same sunglasses and top hat, with his cane and gourd of sake.

- Kakashi: Wow... How come you didn't say anything... when I got your autograph?...
- Jiraiya: I couldn't really... How would I explain it?... I already have a reputation for madness after all... as you may well know... being such a fan and all... I was just thrilled that you were still such a fan!... Even in a new life... with a new face and identity... the emergent spirit remains intact... and resonant... to reemerge... as a stirring resonant echo once more... Immortal sympathetic resonance... is the real truth of our existence... And death is nothing but an illusion... born of ignorance and chaos... an incorrigibly myopic blindness to





the truth... beneath the surface of things...

Naruto: Immortal?... sympathy?...

Shintaro: Immortal sympathetic resonance... Think of it this way Naruto... In a legend from before the time of the Otsutsuki... There were supposedly three goddesses... known collectively as the fates... And they would would weave the tapestry of fate... where each individual thread... represented an individual human life... These threads would be woven together forming the fate of our existence... And when any individual thread was cut... that was the end of that human life... But the tapestry remains... and continues for all eternity... with only the overall continuity of the tapestry itself being truly immortal... However... with an understanding of sympathetic resonance... the reality of the tapestry of the fates... is that threads are never really cut... but submerge within the pattern of the weave... only to periodically reemerge within that very same pattern of fate... like an eternally reverberating echo... that only appears to die... only to reemerge again... But they are never really exactly the same... Because resonance is never perfect... or complete... but complex... and chaotic... So the reverberating echo is never exactly the same... but partially distorted... rhyming... instead of perfectly repeating... the eternal propagation of infinite variations... on the same resonant core theme...

Jiraiya: It's like an infinite and eternal game of telephone... I'm just the latest slightly distorted iteration... of the same eternally resonant theme... that you used to know... as Jiraiya...

A small voice pipes up from within Jiraiya's gourd of sake.





Small Voice: And Obito!...

Kakashi: Obito?... Who said that?... Obito?...

Obito: I'm in here!... kind of...

Jiraiya: Allow me... I love this trick...

Jiraiya proceeds to drink from his gourd of sake, then sprays it out of his mouth into the air, forming a fine mist that begins to shimmer slightly as it gradually takes on the translucent image of the full sized but young Uchiha Obito, Kakashi's former teammate, both a villain and a fallen hero of the last great war, dressed in blue with black hair and a pair of goggles, and still wearing the etched headband of a Konoha shinobi. The translucent apparition hangs in the air, feet above the table, as if standing on an invisible spirit stage.

Obito: Tada!... How do I look?... Looking pretty good for dead man!... Younger too!... Who knew dying would be the secret of eternal youth... of course you can't touch anything... But you can go anywhere... And see anything and everything... But you can't do anything about it by yourself... which can be quite maddening... especially if your haunted by regrets... for the part you played in making things that way...

Kakashi: Obito?!?... How are you... living in Jiraiya's gourd?...

Obito: I am not living anywhere Kakashi... I assure you... I am still quite dead... Jiraiya's gourd is just a convenient host... for a messenger spirit of the resistance...

Kakashi: A messenger spirit?... of the resistance?...

Jiraiya: A messenger spirit... is a spirit summoned and recruited by the living...





in order to serve some greater purpose... like the resistance against the Otsutsuki Empire... The spirits of dead shinobi... or enlightened sages... can often be recruited to serve as messenger spirits... Because they often have the freedom to roam the afterlife of the shadow realm... The shadow realm is an important battle field in it's own right... for the resistance... It is a realm of yokai and demons... and all sorts of other bizarre spirits that you cannot possibly imagine... and most likely would never believe... as well as the home of all the various afterlives... of every sentient creature that has ever lived in this metaverse... Messenger spirits can go anywhere within the shadow realm... at will... virtually instantaneously... acting as a courier between any two people capable of accessing the shadow realm... and communing with the spirits within it...

Obito: Or bring them out for a visit... riding along in a gourd of sake...

As the shimmering translucent Obito hovers in the air just above the square table in the center of the room, another translucent shimmering figure shimmers into form and motion heading towards shimmering Obito from somewhere out of sight, as if coming from the side of the stage for some spirit kabuki theater of shimmering translucent shapes. The second figure is of a teenage girl with a Konoha headband and shoulder length brown hair, wearing a simple light purple knee length kimono, with sleeves that come down to the elbow and black shuriken shapes printed all over it's surface.

Kakashi: Rinchan?!?...

Rin: Konbonwa... Kakashi... Sumimasen... We can't stay!... I just had to come get Obito!... Remember?... Obito?... We have that thing to take care of...





I've been waiting forever for you... Even being dead you always manage to be late for everything!... Sayonara!... Kakashi!... See you all later!...

The shimmering Rin drags the shimmering Obito off of the spirit stage as they both shimmer away and disappear.

Jiraiya: I was hoping he could stay longer... But I suppose it can't be helped...

Shintaro: Life comes at you fast in the metaverse... And if your not fast enough... it just might catch you!...

Jiraiya: Then perhaps we should cut to the chase and talk to the big boss...

Naruto: This is all so confusing... Although... the ghost of Obito riding along in gourd of sake... is oddly not nearly as confusing to me as reincarnation... But it's definitely spookier... ya know... I just want to know... how this reincarnation works... Here's Jiraiya... but not exactly Jiraiya... Sasuke and I are supposed to be the reincarnations of Indra and Ashura... Hagaromo's kids... the sons of the Sage of Six Paths... But we're not them... How can you... be you... but not you... That sort of thing is bound to confuse you... ya know?... Or perhaps that's just me... Jiraiya isn't even the same species any more!...

Sasuke: Neither is Itachi...

Jiraiya: It is a function of immortal sympathetic resonance... the same immortal sympathetic resonance that I mentioned before...

Shintaro: Think of it... in terms of radio... Naruto... You've heard of radio before?... if not used it before?... to some limited extent?...

Naruto: I've used field radio before... ya know... And I just approved a new radio





network... young Denki's idea...

Shintaro:

Ai... Think of it as an infinite transceiver network... Individual transceivers come and go... But the network carries on for all eternity... Just like with the individual threads of the weave of the fates... each individual transceiver represents an individual life and identity... But no individual transceiver comes into being all alone... It is created as part of the network... inseparable from this network... except as a superficial illusion in the minds of the ignorant... The signal coming out... is a slightly distorted combination... of all the signals coming in... But not all signals resonate equally well... Especially compatible signals coming in at the time of formation... resonate with and imprint themselves upon the new transceiver in the system... Each newly born life... acquires an identity mostly formed at conception... part genetic... part resonant... never either strictly one or the other... never a perfect copy... always a slightly distorted but resonant copy... just another infinite variation on a theme... a unique individual chorus in the infinite song of eternity... carrying on as an immortal echo for all eternity within the aether... of the vast and infinite metaverse... perpetually coming back around again... as just another infinite variation... on the same resonant theme...

Sarada:

But if that's the case... then where does the spirit come from that is summoned by the Ancestor Summoning Shikigami Jutsu?... And what is the afterlife at all... if what you say is true?...

Shintaro:

Every incarnated life... is essentially an imperfect copy... of an imperfect copy to begin with... Every shikigami summoning... is an imperfect copy of an imperfect copy... The afterlife of the aether... is part of the infinite eternal





memory of the eternal metaverse itself... There is no location to the afterlife... and yet it is simultaneously everywhere all around us... co-resonant with us... but submerged beneath the surface illusion of things... Once summoned... the shikigami copy resonates with the after life of the spirit summoned... and adds to it's memory... as if it were still alive... This and only this is the true extent to which the dead live in the afterlife... Whenever the living think of the dead... the thoughts and the memories of the living... resonate with the afterlife of the spirit within peoples thoughts... and adds to them... for better or for worse... for an afterlife of hell... wallowing in regrets... or a heaven of reminiscence... basking in the triumph of posterity... Strong enough spirits can become aware of this process... and can free themselves to wonder the shadow realm of the spirit world... It is they who may become spirit messengers... or may recruit others to serve as well... In fact Sasuke... That may be a solution for you and your family...

Sasuke: A solution?... How?... In what way?...

Shintaro: A completely solid shikigami summoning... may not be required... simply for the solace of conversation... I suggest that you may wish to recruit your parents to become spirit messengers... Given all that's going on I suspect your father Fugaku may wish to be recruited... And your mother could use more time to digest the fate of Itachi... as well as get to know her granddaughter... I know that I wish that I could have more time to at least properly introduce myself to her... as her father... not just her old doctor...

Sarada: How does that even work?...

Jiraiya: Allow me once more... This trick never gets old...

Himawari: Morisan!... Morisan!... Didn't you say you were still a juvenile?... Should





you really be drinking so much sake?!?...

Jiraiya: I am a juvenile... But my new species is immune to almost all forms of poison... I couldn't even get drunk if I tried... unfortunately... And my kind have lots of poison of our own naturally...

Shintaro: The method of Jiraiya's species may be unique to them... But there are a wide variety of methods for communing with the spirits... I can show you some of them tomorrow... There's even one that uses a variation of the Super Beast Scroll Justu... Something that I came up with based on a work of fiction that I found... in the archives of the dragon king...

Jiraiya: Ai... But the method of my kind can be especially powerful... although it can be a bit of a party line...

Jiraiya takes another swig of sake and creates another misty miasma. Three figures take shape within the shimmering mist above the center table. In the center floats an old gray haired man in white robes with his legs folded in a meditation position, as if sitting on an invisible meditation cushion in mid air, with a pair of small horns protruding out of his forehead. In the middle of his forehead sits a red Rinne Sharingan, with two purple Rinnegan within his main eye sockets. Surrounding the floating old man are ten floating matte black orbs, about the size of small melons, larger than a fist.

Flanking the floating elder on either side, are two figures assuming a normal standing posture, but floating feet above the center table, both wearing black body armor, a more traditional and heavier kind of body armor than that worn by the shinobi of the present, along with the etched steel forehead protectors of Konoha shinobi. One figure with long straight brown hair and brown eyes, resembles the carved stone face of the First Hokage Senju Hashirama, etched into the cliff face overlooking Konoha, along with the other carved faces of





various hokage, including Naruto, the present hokage. He wears the crest of the Senju Clan painted on the front of his chest plate. The other shinobi has long spiky black hair and a pair of red Mangekyo Sharingan for eyes, with the crest of the Uchiha Clan painted on the front chest plate.

Shintaro: Hagaromo sensei... I've managed to bring most of the pertinent parties together... I hope this will suffice... I don't really have any real pull here... And I would rather not force the issue unnecessarily... I have done enough of that already... probably...

Sasuke: I'll say...

Hagaromo: Please don't hold any of this against young Shintaro here... Take out your frustrations on me if you must... young Sasuke... The necessities of the resistance against the Otsutsuki Empire require more than a good deal of subterfuge and run around... as your brother Itachi has no doubt told you... He sent me word of your meeting... I'm glad that you two could reconnect... Family and the recourse to the spiritual support of family... may be the only things that can sustain us throughout the duration... of what may continue to be a multi-generational struggle for millennia to come...

Shintaro: Not if I can help it...

Hashirama: Now now little Shintaro... Your grandfather wouldn't appreciate that sort of talk... Not without a plan to pull it off at any rate... 'Empty bravado only gets stupid people killed... and those around them often suffer the most as a result'...

Spiky Uchiha: I can't agree... I still say we take the fight to this emperor... He's vulnerable politically... We just have to figure out how to topple him... and take over...





The entire empire is weak... and vulnerable... If we can just figure out how to leverage that weakness... we could become the empire!...

Shintaro: I want nothing to do with becoming empire!... Madarasama... I just want them to go away... and to leave my family in peace... And that can never be... So they must be destroyed... Even if I may die a futile death in the process... Even if all I have left to do in this life... is to set my self on fire... for the sake of nothing more than shining a light on the tragic stupidity of this twisted metaverse... in order to accomplish nothing... but to only slightly lessen the burden upon my own family going forward without me... Then I will do so willingly... and gladly... if that is truly all I have left that I can do...

Madara: A truly hearty and brave sentiment... young Shintaro... But the building falling and clashing of empires is an unavoidable facet of what you like to call 'the cycle of life' in this metaverse... More often than not... you either become the empire and conquer... or you become the conquered victims of some other empire... And some of your family actually have legitimate claim to the throne...

Shintaro: And they will stake that claim over my dead body!...

Hashirama: Now now little Shintaro... Your family may not have many options in the long run... but to take up Madara on his suggestion...

Shintaro: With all due respect cousin Hashirama... shut up and rest in peace...

Hashirama: Ouch... That was harsh... All I'm saying is that... They might not have another option... it should at least be up to them... Sodesuka?...

Shintaro: I feel tired... I'm afraid that I must retire from this discussion... please feel free to continue on in my absence...





Shintaro gets up and walks back to lie down and sleep on one the of the crew bunks built into the back wall.

Madara: I think our mad magician friend may be a bit sensitive when it comes to his family... and the throne...

Hashirama: Leave him be Madara... He has every right to be... And we did not come here to dwell on young Shintaro...

Sarada: Ancestor?... Are you really the Uchiha Madara?...

Madara: Why yes I am... young Uchiha... Itachi said your name was Sarada... sodesuka?...

Sarada: Hai... distinguished ancestor...

Madara: I'm sure you must have heard all about me... You must be a bit awestruck... at the not-so-living legend...

Sarada: Actually there isn't much about you at all outside of general history... Everything else is classified... And what is in the general history... isn't exactly flattering... outside of the tales of your personal prowess...

Madara: Nani?... Sodesuka?...

The vaporous apparition of Madara leaps from his invisible platform above the center table, and lands on the floor in front Sarada.

Madara: Please tell me that you were at least impressed with that much... I may be a villain... But I'm the best villain you know bar none... You know young Saradachan... even if Shintaro's other family isn't interested in the throne of empire... that needn't be any concern for the Uchiha Clan necessarily...





Someday there may be room for you on the throne... Does that interest you at all?... Please say yes... The dead have no real choice but to live vicariously through the living... My own ambitions for personal power may be as long dead now as my own flesh... But I would love to believe that there is hope for the rise of the Uchiha in the future...

Sarada: Well I don't know about the throne to the empire... But I do aim to become hokage someday... Even though my learned ancestor Shintaro doesn't really approve of any unnecessary involvement in politics...

Madara: Sodesuka?!?... That is excellent news... I wanted to be hokage once... even Hashirama once thought that I should be first hokage... before everything got more complicated... We can plot your rise to power together!... Never mind that stick-in-the-mud Shintaro!... The Uchiha are made for power!...

Sarada: With all due respect distinguished ancestor... your personal power may be legendary... but your political career was a complete failure... and frankly... an infamous failure...

Madara: Well that may be true... But you can still learn from my failures... As that old stick-in-the-mud might say... 'do as I say... not necessarily as I do... for your own sake... if you know what's good for you...

As the discussions of politics and empire continue, Shintaro rests quietly with his head turned away from the group, but with his sightless eyes open, staring at nothing as the others talk without him.

There Is No Alone!
Forever Never Ending!





The Mad Sage Of Uzushio, A Naruto Fan Fiction
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