

## Chapter 13: The Sword of Shinobi's Love

“-. July 23, 6 ANB .-“

“-. Uchiha Shisui, Konoha Anbu Ninja, Codename Crow .-“

“When Heaven and Earth first appeared, three Spirits came about in the High Plains of Heaven.”

Shimura Danzo, in the end, ran away.

“First was Amenominakanushi, the spirit Master Mighty Center of Heaven, whose name was Manu, and whose hands moulded life in his own image that we would henceforth be known as mankind.”

One could never credibly call Shimura Danzo a coward.

“Second was Takamimusubi, the spirit Lofty Growth, High Creator, whose name was Yemo, and who gave up his life for Earth to spring eternal, that mankind would henceforth understand sacrifice and choice.”

But it turned out practicality could make people run away every bit as fast as a faint heart.

“Third was Kamimusubi, the Divine Creator, whose name was Triton, and who descended from heaven to be amongst mankind, and so from him came all understanding of wisdom and creation.”

Unfortunately, Shimura Danzo chose to flee down the path he was guarding.

“The Three were each their singular existence and concealed their true selves from the world so that we may thrive unrestricted.”

Shimura Danzo jumped down the hatch to the darkest exit just to meet Crow's spinning pinwheel eyes.

“Vanish like the Kotoamatsukami.”

A human mind suffered the full effects of exposure to the empty chaos of the primordial void.

“You are only the second man to hear these words reclaimed in full for human kind.”

Shimura Danzo fell, mind utterly undone.

“Be honoured.”

Perfect manipulation of the senses could persuade someone to do anything while believing their decisions were their own. Perfect manipulation of the senses could be used to make someone believe anything. Perfect manipulation of the senses could be used to convince a brain that it had just dissolved back into feckless dust.

And if he ruined Danzo’s afterlife through disappointment that his illusion was better than anything there, well...

*I never claimed to be a saint.*

It was probably arrogant of him to believe his imagination could beat all the things down in Yomi, but Crow was an Uchiha. Arrogance was an inborn trait.

Ask anyone.

Crow pressed a hand to his right eye, or rather tried and failed because of the mask. It would be closed for a good while after that.

Hound caught up first. He took the situation in at a glance, gave Crow a penetrating look, and put his hand to his ear. “Target Down. Crow got the takedown, target in catatonic state with no additional visible injuries.” He listened. “Understood. Proceeding to next objective. Sending replacement now.” He pulled the body in a three-way carry. “Crow, report to the Hokage for further orders.”

“Understood.”

He found the Third back at the site of his fight with Danzo, visibly tired and his battle attire slightly scuffed in places, but still standing, however stiffly, and directing his ninja, taking reports and firing out orders as ever. Crow was motioned to approach and told to give his report.

He knelt and did so quickly, succinctly and leaving nothing out, making sure to name his technique and describe its applications exactly.

The Third’s face when he was done... Crow couldn’t tell if it was more sympathetic or displeased.

He was ordered to wait, so he did so. Despite what it looked to the rest of the ANBU that one of their own was effectively made to kneel quietly for all of them to see. It was a snub and a message.

When all but the Hokage Guard Platoon were gone to help secure the base, the Third still didn't turn to look at him.

"You lied in your report."

"Yes, Lord Hokage."

Just because Danzo believed him when he claimed to have used up Kotoamatsukami for the decade didn't mean it was true. Crow didn't believe for a second the Third Hokage hadn't at least suspected he'd lied in that report, but it *had* been a lie.

"Lying to the Hokage is unacceptable."

Crow hadn't gone out of his way to confess to the Hokage after the fact, so it did technically constitute lying to him as well, however indirectly. Danzo's place in the chain of command had still been legitimate at the time. "Yes, Lord Third."

"Take off your mask, it is no longer fit for purpose."

*'It' is no longer fit, not 'you'.* "Yes, Lord Third." Crow came off, leaving Uchiha Shisui kneeling before his supreme commander.

"I will deal with you after the present affair is concluded. Until then, you are restricted to the Uchiha clan grounds."

"As you command, Lord Third."

Choosing not to volunteer the truth to the Hokage – regardless that he obviously knew about it – had been nothing but Shisui's calculated set-up for his own self-flagellation, but now that it finally caught up with him, he felt surprisingly light.

"Just tell me one thing."

Shisui waited.

"Why not just tell me you wanted out?"

"That would have been dishonourable."

"I wonder if you mean for me, your clan, or yourself," Sarutobi Hiruzen sighed, lighting his pipe with a snap of his fingers. "Do not answer, I know you do not know either. If you did, perhaps you'd have come up with a better plan than to force me into a position where

dishonourable discharge is the least of bad options. You Uchiha and your accursed dramatics, I should have shut the ANBU to children the moment I took office like I wanted.”

The Hokage was carefully not phrasing anything as a question, so Shisui said nothing.

“Dismissed, shinobi.”

*Guess my rank is in the air as well.* Shisui stood and turned to leave.

“One last thing.”

Shisui stopped just short of the tunnel mouth.

“Next time you think of lying to your loved ones ‘for their own good’, don’t bother. If just a handful of interactions with a stranger were enough to emotionally compromise you so thoroughly, your judgment is not fit to make any decisions for other people.”

Hindsight, as always, was not an excuse. “... I will remember your words, Lord Hokage.”

“... Yes, I should have expected that answer as well. Go.”

Finally, Shisui passed out of the Hokage’s sight and proceeded to escape the Root base as fast as body flicker could take him. Which was half as fast as before because having one eye out of commission did terrible things to your depth perception.

He had just climbed down from the Hokage Rock when the glow of fire suddenly erupted from the very opposite edge of Konoha.

*That’s the Uchiha Grounds!*

Shisui rushed over fast as he could, stopping only twice to demand answers, but neither nin was any less shocked or confused than him, even the ANBU!

He was two districts away when Akimichi Chouza grew to giant size in the middle of the compound. He made it one more street when he received Yamanaka Inoichi’s telepathic transmission. He almost fell off the roof and broke his neck. *The strength of it – how far did he send, what’s happening? Who are those nin, are they Root, but their symbols-?* He was two streets away when Akimichi Chouza shrunk back down to size and vanished out of sight. Hyuuga Hiashi was leading his people over and out of the Uchiha compound just as Shisui reached the place from the opposite direction, his daughter held tight inside his arms. A smattering of shinobi from the other clans were doing the same with all the rest of Sasuke’s age-mates.

*This is full scale evacuation!*

“Uchiha-san!” A Hyuuga he didn’t recognize jumped in his path just as Shisui finally landed on the nearest roof within the compound proper. “Hyuuga Kintetsu, chuunin.”

*And I’m no rank at the moment!* “Report!”

“There was an attack on the party grounds. The Jonin commander has summoned all hands, I will lead you to him!”

*There was WHAT?!*

But he followed Kintetsu even though the man went the long way around to gather everyone else he could find. Many other nin were streaming in, Lord Nara must have assigned him to force consolidation, as expected of the Jonin Commander.

When Shisui landed on the eaves of the district utilities management building, Nara Shikaku was giving orders to ninja flickering in and out while crouched on a power pole with his shadow spread out of the pole’s own, like tentacles all over the street below and the half a dozen ninja frozen upon it. They all wore black cloaks with red clouds and masks with the Rain symbol on their forehead. “Take them to Morino as soon as they are neutralised. Genin, continue evacuation, chunin protect them and their charges and otherwise fight to kill, jonin switch to capture, this group and any remaining stragglers are interrogation priorities. Exceptions are anyone we have with middling or better barrier techniques, have them report to Fugaku in the Council Hall. Shisui! How fares today’s operation? What word from the Hokage?”

“Sir! Counter-insurgency operation was a success, Lord Third was well when I was dismissed, but I cannot speak to his awareness of events here prior to the report by the patrolling nin, which should only be reaching him now. There was no mention of a parallel operation in our mission debrief. I was only alerted to a disturbance by the fire just now! Requesting sitrep!”

“Not an operation, an attack by rogue Uchiha nin and attempted kidnapping.”

*Gods, what happened – wait, what Uchiha nin gone rogue? We have no missing Uchiha on record!*

“Lords Hyuuga, Uchiha and Uzumaki were successful in repelling the hostile, but the situation is still sensitive. Enemy abilities include Byakugan-proof camouflage, regeneration, mokuton and intangibility, on top of the general Uchiha repertoire.”

*Such powers, how do they still exist never mind in a single person – wait, Lord Uzumaki?*

“Enemy reportedly fled, but we cannot be sure with the skills displayed. Report to Fugaku at the Council Hall!”

“At once, Commander!”

*Hanzo was in a fight?! And Lord Nara mentioned attempted kidnapping, dammit, today was the Clan chief’s grand soiree, who was the target? The children, the Jinchuuriki, Sasuke? Hanzo himself?*

Itachi landed next to him just as he cleared the next-to-last roof to his destination. “Shisui, follow me!”

Itachi looked, felt and had the right chakra to his Sharingan, so Shisui complied and followed him around to the side entrance. A glance at the main doors showed that everyone else was being put through security measures that Shisui had only experienced during war drills. “What the hell happened here?”

“The Fourth’s Uchiha student is alive. He infiltrated the party under a disguise provided by an accomplice that fooled both the Sharingan and the Byakugan. Motivations and aims are still unclear, I was not present for the full confrontation as I was evacuating Sasuke and the other children, but it was clear even in the initial confusion that Lord Hanzo was the one being singled out.”

The side entrance still had some security, so Shisui complied with it by rote while listening to Itachi’s summary in growing disbelief. An infiltration narrowly exposed by Hyuuga Hiashi, an attempted hostage situation only mostly averted because *Uchiha Obito* was now some sort of super-regenerating plant man with Senju Hashirama’s legendary techniques, the Kyuubi jinchuuriki barely not abducted (or killed) because his mother’s bloodline randomly activated, all capped with an attempted abduction of Hanzo himself because...

Because he hurt the nutjob’s feelings?!

And the abduction was only averted because Hanzo went and pulled more ridiculous nonsense out of his backside than even Shisui knew about.

*How does Hanzo have Susanoo, why does Hanzo have Susanoo, since when does Hanzo have Susanoo?!*

“Big brother, you’re back!” Sasuke cried the moment they were finally through to... the council antechamber where the most confidential talks were had and thus the security was the best in the district. “What’s happening out there, is the missing nin gone, did everyone else make it home okay, Mister Masanari won’t talk to us and Naruto won’t wake up!”

Lord Fugaku and Lady Mikoto were, indeed, not alone in the room. Sasuke was tugging on their sleeves – Itachi distracted him, thank gods – Uzumaki Naruto was laid out cold on the settee, and Hanzo sat next to him, leaning back with eyes closed and... a hazy aura around him that the Sharingan used to see a lot less clearly before. It was a spectral, glass-like blue and seemed to fade outward with distance, but there were strands and shoots of golden through it, seeping down and up over his skin, steadily looping up and out through his chakra pathways, moving like syrup through the Celestial Gates in reverse order, where was it going? *Mangekyou Sharingan*.

Hanzo stirred, saw him, blinked twice at the sight of his right eye firmly shut, and pinched his nose. “Ninja lie. Of course.”

Shisui felt a pang, but said nothing. He deserved it.

“I should have known, the spirit doesn’t go through such a paradigm shift just from external stimuli, it only does so when you become a more refined version of yourself.”

Shisui cleared his throat and pointed above Hanzo’s right shoulder. “What’s that?”

“Oh, you can see it then? Only Hiashi’s been able to, so far, and just barely.”

“It looks like a blob. Or the sun, except it’s too gooey-looking, and it’s gold instead of blue like the rest of you – or neon? It’s seeping into its own blob right out of you, should I be more worried than usual?”

Hanzo’s expression shuttered. “I don’t want to talk about it.”

“Oh. Well-“

“Clan Chief on your nine.”

“Shisui, report!” Fugaku called as he neared. “We could have used you, where have you been? Does the Hokage finally have an explanation for why I was deprived of the one technique that might have nipped this disaster in the bud?”

That was borderline seditious, but the Hokage *had* pre-emptively pronounced the secrecy lifted the moment the objective was secured. “As of roughly twenty minutes ago, Shimura Danzo has been arrested for treason and remanded to the custody of the Torture and Interrogation division.”

Fugaku was astonished. “... I see. That... is much better news than I have come to expect of this village.” The man sighed. “At least there is *something* to salvage this disaster-”

Hanzo jerked in shock. “Oh shit!”

“What now?” “What’s wrong?” “Sir-“

“Shisui, the Hokage – Obito’s there!” What-?! ”No, look out!” The man’s eyes blew wide.

Shisui flickered to his side. “Hanzo, what are you sensing?!”

“The three men with the Hokage, Obito’s killing them-fuck.”

*Raidō, Genma, Iwashii...*

“What, what is it?” Fugaku demanded.

Hanzo looked at them in bewilderment. “The Hokage’s gone.”

“”””WHAT?!””””

“He vanished, they both vanished, Obito must have taken him with him to-“ Hanzo suddenly surged from the couch. “GET THE CHILDREN OUT OF HERE NOW!”

The floor exploded.

Tatami mats tore, wood splintered, earth burst up and apart as a tree burst out of it, shooting up like a battering ram, growing, twisting, sprouting gnarled branches all over like wrinkled, gnarly hands out to claw them to shreds.

*Susanoo!*

The wood splintered against his emerald-green defense but he had no footing, the earth threw him aside and the wood pushed hard at him even as it splintered uselessly, Itachi jumped with Sasuke for the closest window, Lady Mikoto did the same with Naruto, Lord Fugaku barely kept his balance as he charged for the threat instead, the Sharingan let Shisui see it all down to the pinhead fractures in the sprouting bark, including Hanzo dashing past him the *opposite* way



with all the speed he could wring out the Eight Celestial Gates, arm outstretched at a glass jar that had just flown in through the *other* window.

Crack.

The jar burst just before Hanzo reached it.

The room exploded into black writhing smoke that only *barely* didn't reach Shisui on account of the ghost-like veil walling it back, but the earth still moved and the Birth of Trees technique was still going, the ground broke harder, the black mist seeped past the edges of the blue shield even as the tree shot up further, bigger and wider, so wide between a breath and the next that the council hall was broken in half as branches burst through the ceiling and kept on going up.

*Unh!* Shisui grunted as the ceiling broke against the Susanoo. "Tch!" The black cloud reached his nose just as he gasped for breath, and now he felt like his own flesh was eating itself amidst a foul, rancid smell, and the pain – it itched more than it stung! *Poison!* Shisui jumped off the branch and on the palm of his guardian spectre, the Susanoo's other hand gripping tight at the trunk as it carried him up. He cast a field medical jutsu on his chest to much too minimal effect. "Agh!" The pain, it seared like a firebrand inside. The Susanoo's self-immolating flames should have protected him from airborne toxins, but it didn't work against attacks from the ground, and even then – the cloud moved so fast and suddenly, it was so dense, could whatever it was have blasted past the green fire through sheer volume?

*What technique is this?*

There was an explosion in the tree crown above.

*Hanzo!* Shisui snarled and clawed, pulled and ran his way up to the top as fast as he could. "Hanzo, where are you?!"

"-f I hear 'humans fear what they don't understand' one more time, there's going to be murder!" The man in question said somewhere within the leaves, they were too many and close, growing, snarling together, he couldn't push through, maybe his crow-? "Humans only fear what they understand to be dangerous!"

*Don't argue with the crazy missing nin!* Shisui thought wildly. "Out of my way!" Susanoo's drill sword ground everything apart in a diagonal *just* off of where he'd heard Hanzo's voice come from.

A wide gap was smashed through the tree crown, with Obito right in the middle of it, falling from his lost perch to the one right below, untouched and uncaring of Shisui's attack on him.

"You did it, didn't you? You rediscovered what the Uzumaki were doing." Uchiha Obito didn't even twitch as Shisui's kunai flew through him, focused solely on growing more and more branches to keep Hanzo immobilized in a caging net of twisting, crunching boughs. "I'm sorry, Masanari-san, but I cannot allow a second Hashirama to emerge."

The entire trap *rippled* like a water twister with Hanzo still inside and Shisui jump-

"ACK!" Stinging pain in his ankle made him stumble, slip and fall onto a lower bough with a wrench in his knee, his foot – it felt like a – a bite! What was – the snake burst to gore when his kunai skewered its skull, but it was too late. "Shit, a snake – here, now but then, that means-"

Everything above him suddenly vanished with a sucking gust of air and a splatter of blood and splinters, and Hanzo's body fell down, grisly and flayed from toe to head.

Shisui felt like he'd puke. "Oh gods!"

Then the body grabbed at the bark nearby and flopped to a three-point landing right in front of him with a wet, hacking splat. Blood stopped pouring, lids grew back over his eyes, his cheeks began to weave back together over his teeth and tongue, and the rest of the skin too, healing right before his eyes, it – it was a miracle!

"You are a truly annoying man," Obito's voice said from somewhere above. "Thanks for the loose chunks, though, I'm sure I'll find a use for them."

Shisui stumbled to his feet, barely keeping balance on the leafy branches beneath, he was almost at the edge of what he could perch on, especially with his foot numb and unsteady, his chest feeling like his lungs were eating themselves. He tried to capture Obito's gaze but he didn't fall for it. There were flickers of movement down below at the edge of his one-eyed sight, and Hanzo was...

"And I'm not the only one."

"*Hanzo's aura...*" Shisui wondered distantly. "*Where's the golden blob?*"

Chains burst out of Hanzo's bloody meatgrinder of a back, sunk into the wood, wrapped around it and back up around himself as Hanzo looked at Shisui, his freshly healed face moving from gritted teeth to a loose expression of resignation. "Yin Release: Trito's Tribulation."

Then the Sword of Kusanagi burst out of the tree trunk, speared through Hanzo's spine and blasted him away with a mighty blast of air before Shisui's sluggish mind could even process what the Sharingan showed him.

The understated but very present *presence* that was Masanari Hanzo completely vanished.

"No! HANZO!" The wood was shredded, the chains had barely slowed him down, then the rest of the events caught up to him in full. "Orochimaru! You're here as well, you bastard?! Fire Release--"

The tree exploded.

It was all Shisui could do to shield his face, regretting the absence of his mask as he fell down, his clothes ripping just like his skin in the aftermath of the overpowering wind technique, when had Susanoo lapsed? *Susanoo* – he couldn't pull it out, his chakra-

All he could do was look up at Orochimaru's head undulating up from the torn treetop like a snake, the Kusanagi no Tsurugi grown so long that the tip and its victim had already vanished in the forest beyond the village walls, rumbling, blasting leaves and dust up in the air as the great trees fell over each other in its wake. The rogue Uchiha rippled into sight on the last branch and gave a long, wide kick behind the other missing nin just as Orochimaru finally spat out the hilt.

Orochimaru boosted off it and flew out of the village and sight like a bullet blast.

Shisui looked down and managed to grab one of lower boughs, small and gnarly but enough to – his muscles spasmed.

He lost grip and fell from too high, his chakra failed him again, he landed wrong, his leg snapped as he crashed on the chunky, rocky ground with a scream. When he looked at the pain, his shinbone was sticking out of his skin.

Obito landed lightly nearby and sauntered over, pulling a kunai idly before stopping suddenly.

Itachi drove through him kunai-first as if through a ghost. There were words exchanged, testing blows, defiance on one side and oddly respectful mockery on the other, flying shuriken, kunai

clashing, fire techniques being spat, completely on-sided. Shisui witnessed it through a haze of poison and pain that he could only half remember, only his Sharingan snatching any snippet of what was happening as his mind slipped away from him along with flying fire and shuriken, Itachi's kunai and Obito's kunai, another kunai that almost took Obito in the eye just as he'd turned solid to slash at *Itachi*'s eyes, black iron scratched over with the sealing characters for shinobi ai no ken.

“Rasengan.”

Uzumaki Naruto appeared in a yellow flash above Uchiha Obito and smashed a spiralling sphere down on his head.

Shisui shut his eyes against the buffeting dust and earth, unable to believe what had just happened. The glow of gold didn't go away, reaching him though his shut eyelids and even brighter when he opened them to see the Uzumaki child stand in front of him, a golden chakra shroud enveloping his body like a cloak of fire.

“The Kyuubi's chakra is surprisingly pleasant.” Naruto's voice said. “Also-“

Golden-orange chains burst from his back into the ground, then upward ahead to surround the Uchiha missing nin, stabbing at him, forcing him to dodge desperately when the second made him drop his knife, his fingers fallen slack despite his technique, for a moment.

“The Adamantine Sealing Chains are surprisingly intuitive as well.”

With the last of his focus, Shisui squinted his sharingan and saw black seals on the chain links as well, as if they were swallowing their own light.

“It's enough that I think I can experiment with Yin release a bit myself.” Naruto's voice said calmly as Obito clenched his weakened fist. “What do you say, Obito? Are you ready for one more lesson from your old teacher?”

“... M-Minato-sensei?”

“Itachi. Get Shisui to the dome before Sir Hanzo's technique expires.”

“Y-Yes... Lord... Lord Fourth?”

“Now!”

“Yes!”

Itachi flickered to a stop next to Shisui, picked him up in a three-way carry and shunshined him away, carrying him all the way to the edge of... a dome of blue light?

“Apologies, Shisui.”

Before he could ask why, Itachi tossed him inside.

The light caught him, broke his fall just enough that he didn't shatter his remaining bones when he met the ground. Shisui rolled over and tried to look around, his vision going grey as his chakra began to slip from his grasp. There were... so many people down, Uchiha, not Uchiha, ninja, not ninja, it... they looked like – the poison cloud! How had it caught so many, what *was* that technique?!

*Not Sasuke, please let it not be Sasuke, not Itachi or Sasuke, that's Lord Fugaku – oh god, what are those spikes?*

Squinting, he tried to look at them, the spikes – they were blood, blood of – he traced their origin through the rapidly worsening daze – the giant toad? The giant toad was laid out on its side to the very edge of the blue-ish light, motionless, almost desiccated as its blood hung out of its pores, a hundred and four steel-hard spikes that were retracting, growing, directed by the vague presence in the blue light to pierce a dozen people at a time through their vital points as they sweated black sludge from their pores and *screamed*.

Shisui struggled to move. Struggled to understand, to remember. “This... is Hanzo's technique?”

*Yin Release –Trito's Tribulation.*

“Hanzo... y-you...”

That's when a dozen and one spikes ran *him* through.

“Hurkh!”

Shisui choked, his stomach, mouth, collar bone, instep, knee, shoulder, elbow, wrist, fingers and his *heart*... they stung, it hurt, he could feel them dig deeper and deeper through his organs, his blood veins, his *nerves*, he felt like all his muscles and organs were going out of control, ignoring his brain no matter how much he screamed inside, he could feel his individual cells but they didn't listen and the blood-

His Celestial Gate of Death burst wide open.

“AaaaaAAAAAAGH!”

*I'll kill you.* Shisui thought amidst his own screams as his consciousness was obliterated in a last wave of pain, not sure even at who. *I'll fucking kill you!*

He came back to awareness all at once, a shock of adrenaline smacking his brain back alight with all the grace of a rampaging tiger. As his mind struggled to re-right itself, Shisui wondered vaguely why Hanzo hadn't used his own Susanoo to protect himself, or whatever it was that he had... but the answer was clear now, wasn't it?

*He left it behind when the tree burst... he saw the poison spread and chose to save everyone else instead.*

Wait, Hanzo's Susanoo could move independently?

The blue... it was still around him now but lessened, less a glassy bubble and more a gossamer web of strings drifting apart, struck through with those same, golden tendrils, but thicker and faster now, they were... were they going back *into* the toad? The blue was growing so weak so quickly, thinning, breaking, unweaving apart as if it was one single thread being pulled at the seams.

And then Shisui's ears rang with the howling roar of a monster.

Snapping his head up, Shisui watched in stunned confusion as the last of the gold violently wrenched free from the flickering spirit made of blue threads and fireflies, and slammed into the dessicated body of the giant toad so harshly that it flopped over as if thrown.

Then Gama exploded.

And the blood and flesh and *rage* of the golden chakra erupted from it, up and up and up and then away over the village walls towards where Hanzo and Orochimaru had disappeared, azure not-chakra feeding into golden chakra grown through a serpentine, dragon-headed beast of lightning and gore.

~~“GET AWAY FROM MY FATHER YOU SON OF A WHORE!”~~