The first time as tragedy, the second time as farce.

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by Dissenter

Summary

Tsuná and his guardians died in a blaze of glory. Then they woke up, slowly, one at a time, in a different world that was the same in all the ways that really mattered. Or the one where Tsuna and his guardians are reincarnated into the class below the Konoha rookie nine.
Rebirth and survival

Chapter Notes

Being mostly eviscerated causes Uchiha Nagi to remember her past life. Her first move is to track down her family.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Uchiha Nagi was dying, half eviscerated by a man in an orange mask with eyes like her own kin. He hadn’t spoken a word as he cut her down, she just another insignificant death among many, and that was probably what saved her life. She’d been unimportant so he’d been careless with her, had struck a deathblow but not a quick one, had left her with her insides spilling out of her torn open stomach. It wasn’t a quick or easy death to face. She was alone, and dying, and so very, very afraid, and something buried deep in her soul had felt this before. Then she remembered.

Chrome woke up to an all too familiar pain, and a child’s body. She pulled her insides together half out of reflex, all too used to weaving her organs from illusions. It took her a moment’s disorientation to identify Uchiha Nagi’s memories, to realise that she had been reincarnated. It took another moment to realise that someone had just tried very hard to kill her and probably thought they’d succeeded, that had she been anyone else they probably would have succeeded. She realised that and in the next breath knew that whoever it was would be coming to check for survivors. She wove a mist illusion of her own corpse just in time, as the man in the mask returned to make sure of the dead. It was a long half hour, lying very still in her own blood, waiting for help to arrive.

…

Everyone was dead. Everyone but her cousin Sasuke, just a year older than her. They’d actually thought he was the only survivor until she’d dispelled her illusion and collapsed at the feet of the Anbu rescue squad. According to the doctors it was a miracle she was alive, her survival clearly a fluke. Apparently Sasuke’s had been nothing of the sort. Apparently her cousin Itachi, Sasuke’s older brother had been the one to kill everyone, and he’d left Sasuke alive on purpose. At least that was the story, and what Sasuke had seen seemed to match it. Chrome had her doubts. She’d seen the man who’d almost killed her and he hadn’t moved like Itachi. Still she held her silence, said nothing untrue, only that she had seen a man in a mask with a sharingan, and it all happened very fast, but she said nothing of her doubts. There was something else at work here and, she was mist. She knew better than to play all her cards before she knew the game.

…

She’d never been particularly close to cousin Sasuke, he’d been clan heir, and a boy, and honestly more than a little self centred, while she’d just been another of many other cousins, shy and a bit of a loner. Now he was all the family she had left, and yet she still didn’t feel all that close to him. He was fixated, on power, and revenge, and Itachi, and she knew he would not hear her doubts. He didn’t think much of her, took subtlety for weakness, and dismissed her as more or less irrelevant to his plans. It was like he’d forgotten, Itachi had let him live, but she had survived even after they’d tried to kill her, whoever they really were. Still Chrome was a mist, she knew the value in being underestimated. She let Sasuke, let the whole village think her survival was a fluke. She hid her flames, and she pretended, pretended her attacker had slipped up and not wounded her as badly as he
thought, pretended she’d used genjutsu instead of mist flames to hide the fact she was still breathing, and she was rewarded by the way people dismissed her and left her to her own devices. While Sasuke got the attention, and respect and scrutiny of the surviving Uchiha heir, the last hope for the continuation of the clan, Chrome was free to act as she wished.

She didn’t need Sasuke’s respect. She had already learned in another lifetime that family was something you chose, not something you were born to, and she could feel that her chosen family were here somewhere. She just needed to find them. Maybe that would fill the gaping hole left by the loss of her clan.

…

She found Tsuna first of course. He was always at the heart of everything. He’d remembered for years, had been in her academy class the whole time, and she couldn’t imagine the pain of knowing your family was all around but didn’t remember you. Tsuna had grown up in the orphanage, and had known who he was from the age of two, when he’d fallen in the river and nearly drowned. He’d been alone and without family, and he’d known, exactly what he was missing. The loneliness must have been unbearable, before some of his guardians started to remember. Even now things still weren’t quite right. Some of them still didn’t remember, but Tsuna had forbidden her from trying to wake them, had said they would remember in their own time, and it wasn’t fair to push. He really was too noble for his own good sometimes.

Tsuna had led her to Mukuro sama, who was thankfully one of those who had already awoken. He’d been aware for two years, and had spent most of those two years using his mist flames to run rings around Councilman Danzo and his ethically dubious unauthorised Anbu operation. He had been as glad to see her as she was to see him, neither of their flames felt quite right separate any more and it felt so good to feel them twine back together under the shelter of Tsuna’s sky. Her clan might be dead, but she had her twin-of-the-soul back, and her boss, and some of her friends, and the rest were only a matter of time.

Chapter End Notes

I really shouldn't have started this, but I couldn't help it. The idea wouldn't leave me alone.
Kinship and understanding

Chapter Summary

Sasuke doesn't understand his cousin.

Chapter Notes

Sasuke never used to spend so much time thinking about his cousin Nagi. Not until she was the only family he had left.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Sasuke didn’t understand his cousin. Everyone was dead, the whole clan, their whole family. Everyone was dead and she acted like it didn’t matter, like life went on anyway. Itachi had killed them all and laughed. Sasuke didn’t understand how she could refuse to spend every minute of every day training to kill him. Sasuke wanted him dead, Nagi just… pretended he didn’t exist.

She’d always been a bit odd. Quiet and withdrawn. Sasuke honestly hadn’t known her very well, but now she was all he had left, they should have been united in a single purpose and they weren’t. While Sasuke trained himself into the ground every day, and didn’t leave the compound except for school, she spent every waking moment she could away from the compound. She trained in the academy practice fields instead of the clan ones, ate at food stalls, or restaurants, or her classmate’s houses whenever she could wrangle an invitation. She’d asked him to go with her a few times, but he’d refused. Friends were just another weakness for Itachi to exploit, a distraction from training, an intrusion upon his grief. Sasuke didn’t need friends, he needed vengeance.

Nagi had friends though. Which was odd because he didn’t remember her having many before the massacre. Now she spent every possible moment with them, and Sasuke didn’t understand how she could leave herself so open, so vulnerable. She had friends, and she’d told him, she didn’t care about vengeance, it wouldn’t bring anyone back, wouldn’t fix the hole in her heart where her family used to be.

It wasn’t that the massacre hadn’t affected her. He wasn’t sure how bad her physical injuries were, but he knew they’d been bad enough that Itachi had left her for dead, and Itachi was Anbu, he knew when injuries ought to be fatal. She’d lost an eye, and that was no small loss for an Uchiha. And it wasn’t just physical damage either. Her eyes, or rather eye, had changed, had aged a thousand years overnight, innocence replaced with a bitter understanding that Sasuke knew all too well.

But despite that kinship he didn’t understand her. Didn’t understand why when she’d woken up she had refused to answer to Uchiha Nagi anymore, had said her name was Chrome now. He didn’t understand how she could just discard the name her family gave her, one of the last solid connections she had to them. He hadn’t understood even when she tried to explain it, when she told him that she wasn’t the same person anymore, that she had seen too much to be the same person, and the name of the innocent girl that had never seen death just didn’t feel right anymore.
The worst thing was she wasn’t wrong, she wasn’t the same Uchiha Nagi any more than he was the same Uchiha Sasuke. Uchiha Nagi had been a quiet, sweet natured, unmemorable cousin, with no particular interest in violence, a relative he’d barely even thought about day to day. Now she clung to the ridiculously oversized trident she’d dug out of the family stores and refused to go anywhere without it. The worst thing was she actually wasn’t bad at using it, on the few occasions he’d managed to get her to stick around the compound long enough for a spar. Now she had a whole network of friends, a new interest in genjutsu, and a name that wasn’t even a proper name, and he thought about her every day, her safety, and happiness an unwelcome concern that he could never quite dismiss. She was the only family he had left and he didn’t understand her in the slightest, couldn’t bring himself to think of her as Chrome rather than Nagi, couldn’t manage to let go of that tenuous link to how things used to be.

He especially didn’t understand her choice in friends. He didn’t understand why she needed them, and he definitely didn’t understand why those ones. There was Sawada Tsunayoshi who was… fluffy, and small, and cute in a way no self respecting ninja should be. He didn’t understand why she was so drawn to him, maybe it was a girl thing, girls liked cute things didn’t they? But after a brief observation he concluded that no, that couldn’t be it. That whole academy class seemed to centre around Sawada, boys and girls alike. For some unfathomable reason, Sawada was the most popular kid in his class. It was bizarre.

Sawada he could live with though, him and all his crazy friends, weird though they were. He seemed relatively harmless at least. There were bigger problems in his cousin’s friendship choices. Specifically Rokudo Mukuro, who sent chills down Sasuke’s spine. There was something about that boy that reminded him more than a little of Itachi, maybe it was because he was a genjutsu expert. He and Nagi were almost always together, and Sasuke found it discomforting on a primal level. Mukuro was a year younger than he was, and no more skilled than the rest of his age group, but something about him registered as a threat. Sasuke had no idea why Nagi would want to be friends with that.

Maybe avoiding his cousin wasn’t the most healthy way of coping with the way she confused him, but she was distracting him from his determination to kill Itachi. She was all the family he had left and sometimes he thought, if he let her get close, he might forget the importance of what he had to do. It would be too easy to care, and caring was a weakness he couldn’t afford. Not when she lacked the strength to join him on his quest.

Chapter End Notes

So the plan is to alternate viewpoints between Naruto characters and KHR characters. Hayato, the world's angriest Nara is up next.
Drama and acceptance

Chapter Summary

Meet Hayato, the Nara clan's collective karmic punishment for a lack of work ethic (or at least that's the prevailing theory amongst those who believe in such things)

Chapter Notes

Hayato remembered who he was the minute he met Tsuna. His clan was too busy being terrorised to notice the change.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Hayato was four he met Sawada Tsunayoshi, and the whole world shifted. He remembered. Years of life spent following, fighting for, protecting, the man in front of him, the best man he'd ever met, the only man he'd ever follow. Who... wasn't actually a man at that point in time. Was in fact an adorably fluffy four year old boy. That was ok though because his eyes were the same, and when he saw Hayato they lit up with delighted recognition. Juudaime looked like a little kid, but clearly he remembered their past life just fine, they could pick up right where they left off. Hayato wouldn't have to make friends with him all over again or anything like that.

That whole realisation took place in the space of a few moments after they first entered the gate of the ninja academy. Which was a little inconvenient. It had proved nearly impossible to focus on his lessons with the new memories of a life already lived buzzing around in his head. It was lucky no-one expected a Nara to pay much attention in class. Although he did get some odd looks about the enthusiasm with which he attached himself to Tsuna. Hayato didn’t particularly care what they thought though, so he paid no attention.

Tsuna was a bright spot in a life that was shaping up to be... uncomfortably like his old one to be perfectly honest. His mother had been a civilian, from some no-name village out in the sticks, his father had been the ninja she nursed back to health after finding him injured in the woods, all very cliché. One thing led to another, and his father had fucked off back to Konoha, unwittingly leaving his mother pregnant. Fast forward three years, and his mother had got sick, and sent a message to Konoha telling his father to come and get him.

That must have been a fun revelation. For one thing, the man in question was married and his wife was understandably upset to realise he'd been fucking some random civilian woman on the side. For another thing the man in question was a clan ninja, a Nara to be precise, and ninja clans had very strict rules about leaving bastard children scattered around the countryside, most of which boiled down to don't. So his father had gotten in trouble, with his wife, and his clan, and apparently the Hokage had given him a very disappointed look when he asked for a leave of absence to pick up the child he didn’t know he had.

Little Hayato hadn’t been too pleased about being packed up and sent to a new home to live with a father he’d never met. He might have harboured some... entirely understandable resentment at the
whole situation.

The Nara called him the demon beast from the abyss. His father still got dirty looks from the rest of the clan for spawning him. Hayato felt a certain level of petty satisfaction about that. Fucker had it coming, leave his mother alone and pregnant would he?

Still Hayato wasn’t exactly the most popular of clan members. The Nara were pretty easy going, but they really didn’t know what to do with a child that flew into a homicidal rage whenever anyone irritated him, and consistently interrupted other people’s naps with his screaming temper tantrums. (He was three, he had issues, it was entirely reasonable under the circumstances.)

He suspected they sent him to the academy in the vague hope that it would settle him down or at least tire him out enough that he stopped being a menace. It kind of worked, for a given value of worked, at least in Tsuna’s presence, sort of. He was less angry and more obsessive at least. The memory of his past life had at least given him some perspective. As family went the Nara really weren’t that bad, he didn’t hate them. The clan wasn’t in much of a mood to appreciate this fact though because going to the academy, had also led to Hayato discovering explosive tags.

It didn’t matter what they did, they hid the tags and within a day Hayato had figured out how to make his own that were even bigger and better, they locked up the calligraphy supplies, and he picked the locks, they got better locks, and he stole the stuff from the academy. It was a nightmare, explosions, at all hours of the day and night, flashy, destructive, loud, explosions. Hayato would feel bad for them, but really it was their own fault for being such lazy bastards anyway. He was the one being conscientious and working hard to improve his skills, they were just sleeping, they got no sympathy from him.

Tsuna did sigh a bit when he explained that to him, so Hayato cut back on his training on clan grounds, at least in the early morning and during midday siesta time. He didn’t want to make Tsuna sad after all and there were always the academy training grounds. (Half the clan spontaneously built Tsuna a shrine when they realised he was responsible for the reduction in interruptions of their nap time.)

Bianchi, still his older sister, was probably the only one of his clanmates who really understood him, he wasn’t sure if she remembered, or just happened to be a bit less… apathetic than most Nara, but either way she didn’t look at him like he was a punishment from the heavens for her sins in a past life. She actually rather liked him in a distant, “cute stroppy kid I’m related to and can therefore torment”, way. She was mostly busy with her own ninja career so they didn’t spend a lot of time together, but apparently reincarnation had hit a reset button and he could now be in her presence without collapsing, so they did sometimes train together. It was nice. (Even if he was still careful to avoid her cooking. Some lessons lasted more than one lifetime, and his sister was still training as a poison specialist).

Still his clan might find him troublesome, but they really were remarkably easygoing. Possibly the best family he could have hoped to be reincarnated into. They didn’t understand him, they didn’t really know what to do with him and they deeply resented the way he interfered with their sleep schedule, but they made no effort to interfere with his life choices. They were fully supportive of his friendship with Tsuna, who they saw as a good influence, as well as his newfound habit of training away from the clan compound, which they considered a relief. Life was good. And then the baseball idiot showed up. Hayato was not pleased to see him. Not in the slightest. At all. He hadn’t missed his stupid face, or his stupid laugh or his stupid sword skills. No that was unfair, he could admit the sword skills were useful. But the idiot was still annoying, and Hayato was still irritated that he’d showed up.
Yamamoto hadn’t actually started attending the ninja academy until he’d woken up, had been headed for a civilian career before he ran into Tsuna in an incident that reminded Hayato uncomfortably of that time on the school roof, and had ended in him remembering the life all of them had shared. After that there had been no question of staying in civilian school, and Yamamoto had transferred to the ninja academy to be with Tsuna, and Hayato, and Mukuro who had somehow inserted himself into the class without anyone realising he hadn’t been there all along. If there was a part of Hayato that felt warm and fuzzy at the thought of all of them being back together he would take it to his grave, the idiot didn’t need the encouragement.

Chapter End Notes

So yeah, meet Hayato the angry Nara. The clan is probably never going to forgive his dad for him. Especially not after the incident with the koi pond, the explosive tags, and the contraband fireworks.

Next chapter we have Shikamaru's (and by extension the rest of the clan's) perspective on Nara Hayato the unholy hell child
Chapter Summary

Shikamaru's cousin is troublesome. His cousin's friends are even more so.

Chapter Notes

Shikamaru is a year older than Hayato, he's in the class above but he's still in a good position for observation.

Cousin Hayato was… troublesome. The whole clan was pretty much agreed on that. Shikamaru personally had deep dark suspicions that he was an actual hell demon cunningly disguised as a small child to wreak terrible havoc upon the clan. It was like he’d declared a one child war on peace and tranquillity within Nara clan grounds. Shikamaru had taken to hiding at Chouji’s every time he wanted a decent nap, it was exhausting.

If they hadn’t known better they’d have suspected Hayato wasn’t really a Nara, but they’d run DNA tests when they first brought little three year old Hayato back to the clan. There had been a bit of a fuss about it at the time, at least among the adults. Four year old Shikamaru really couldn’t be bothered to pay attention. Something to do with Cousin Shikaren being in deep trouble with the clan generally and his wife specifically. Anyway the upshot of that was they were very, very sure Hayato was a Nara. Whether he was human or not was up for debate, but he was definitely family.

He didn’t look much like family to be honest. White hair, green eyes, and the most vicious scowl any of them had ever seen on a three year old, not the classic Nara look. The clan had mostly shaken it off and put it down to him taking after his mother that way. His looks weren’t the issue, though. It was his personality.

It hadn’t taken long for them to realise he hadn’t inherited the standard Nara personality either. Hayato was possibly the angriest small child in the entire world. Shikamaru certainly hadn’t met any that were angrier, and he went to school with Uchiha Sasuke and Haruno Sakura. It was almost a shame because Hayato would probably have been quite a cute child if he stopped trying to bite people for five minutes at a time. Shikamaru had been so glad that he was four, and that cousin Hayato was therefore not his problem. Right up until he realised that since he was the future clan head, Hayato eventually would be his problem. Maybe he should try and catch his father out with some sort of immortality jutsu, for the greater good.

He did have the Nara intelligence though. And not just a little of it, he was one of the only kids his own age that could actually give Shikamaru a challenge at shougi. Whatever his other faults, Hayato was a genius. Honestly Shikamaru suspected that made it worse. Hayato was vindictive and violent enough to wreak havoc, and intelligent enough to be very, very good at it. It was really the worst possible combination.

Hayato had put the clan through a solid year of truly nightmarish behaviour, before the adults, in
their infinite wisdom, packed him off to the academy. Where he became at least in theory Shikamaru’s problem, a whole lot earlier than Shikamaru had hoped for. The idea, as far as Shikamaru had been able to make out was that a. maybe school would teach him to behave where all other attempts had failed, b. maybe the physical training would wear him out to the point that he at least had less energy to be a menace, and c. at the very least he’d be out of the compound for a few hours while he was at the academy. It wasn’t actually a terrible plan, Shikamaru’s personal preferences aside, it just happened to backfire particularly spectacularly.

Most of the clan thought the explosives fixation was the worst thing, to come out of sending Hayato to the academy. Certainly it was the most immediate problem, none of them were pleased with having the sound of heavy property damage interrupting their daily naps, and Hayato had turned out to be horrifyingly good at explosive seals. Good enough to write his own and start making improvements, within about a week of learning how to use them. The clan would have been impressed if it wasn’t such a nightmare, with the boy practicing all hours of the day and night, seemingly without the need for sleep. The explosives were terrible, Shikamaru fully agreed. But Shikamaru went to school with his cousin, and he could see a much bigger problem waiting down the line.

Not that anyone believed him. Sawada Tsunayoshi was by all appearances, a perfectly nice, polite, well-mannered young boy. He didn’t make trouble in class, he was genuinely nice to everyone around him, and he even managed to rein in cousin Hayato’s explosives practice to something almost tolerable. As far as the adults were concerned Sawada Tsunayoshi was an angel. A saviour that could do no wrong. They actually encouraged Hayato’s association with him.

The thing was, Shikamaru went to school with them, and he saw things the adults didn’t see. Little details, like the fact that his cousin the uncontrollable rage demon turned into an overenthusiastic hero worshipping puppy around Sawada. Or the fact that at the end of Hayato’s first year, some civilian kid with a Samurai background randomly transferred to the ninja academy, apparently for the sole reason of following Sawada around. Or there was the deeply disturbing genjutsu expert who even the teachers flinched at but for some reason listened to Sawada, and nobody remembered exactly where he came from. There were others too. Quite a lot of others, all of them violent, unstable, or in some other way deeply disturbing, and all of them answered to Sawada.

In fact the whole class was under Sawada’s thumb to some extent, but it seemed to be mostly the really disturbing ones, his cousin included, that were part of what Shikamaru had started mentally labelling the “inner circle”. He had this horrible suspicion his cousin might have joined a cult. He caught Hayato referring to Sawada as Juudaimie once, they had secret meetings, and codes, and titles (apparently his cousin was Storm). They kept recruiting as well, every time Shikamaru turned around it looked like their network had grown, they even had adult ninja that seemed peripherally attached, and as for their fellow students. No-one was safe. They’d picked up one of the two surviving Uchiha right after the massacre, and they kept looking speculatively at Hayato’s older sister, cousin Bianchi.

It was concerning. Shikamaru was concerned. And in a few years this whole mess was going to be his problem. He could just feel it in his bones.

Chapter End Notes

Shikamaru is pretty convinced Tsuna is a cult leader plotting to take over Konoha. No-one believes him because Tsuna is polite, and innocent looking. Shikamaru just wants to
shake all the adults around them and say "yes he's nice and polite, but look at his friends, they're all psychos, what good reason could anyone have for collecting psychos. He doesn't need to make trouble, all he has to do is give them a look, and they'd burn the whole village down for him"
Blending and belonging

Chapter Summary

In which Takeshi has been playing very hard at being a civillian, until Tsuna reminds him who he is.

Chapter Notes

This didn't come out as funny as Hayato's chapter but don't worry the mirror to this chapter should be very funny.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

For as long as Takeshi had been able to remember, the Anbu had watched his father. Not all the time, but on and off at random intervals. Checking to make sure he was staying out of trouble, that he hadn’t become a threat. Takeshi had been very young, three years old, when he first realised why. It was because his father was dangerous, the same way the ninja in the white masks were dangerous. Because there was a sword over Yamamoto Tsuyoshi’s mantle, and a predatory grace in the way he moved, and his accent belonged to a country far from Konoha. It was because his father, and so by extension Takeshi himself weren’t real civilians, not the way the other children in the neighbourhood were.

He hadn’t understood really, not then, but he’d known, with the instinct the other civilian kids didn’t have, but he suspected the ninja kids did. He and his father were different, dangerous. Enough so, that the village administration couldn’t just ignore him. So he did what any young child does upon realising they’re different, he tried very hard to fit in. It hadn’t been hard, he was good with people, his father was the respectable owner of a sushi restaurant, he was fully expected to follow in his fathers footsteps. If it hadn’t been for the shadows in bone white masks that hovered at the edge of his vision sometimes, he might almost have been able to fool himself, the neighbourhood kids were easy.

Honestly he had expected to live his life as a civilian, to inherit his father’s restaurant and live peacefully in the village until he was an old old man and the masked ninja no longer felt the need to watch his family. He’d never expected to have a chance to explore the part of him that was entirely unlike the civilian kids, to learn just what it meant to be dangerous. He expected to play at being ordinary until it became the truth, that’s what everyone expected. In the end though that wasn’t what happened.

In the end what happened was this. He’d been standing on top of the Hokage monument when a stone gave way beneath his feet and he fell to his death, or he would have if an academy trainee called Sawada Tsunayoshi hadn’t caught him, hadn’t moved with unnatural speed and desperate fear and saved him. He fell and Tsuna caught him, and Takeshi knew, who he was, who Tsuna was to him. And judging by the panic in Tsuna’s eyes when he saw him fall, so like a moment on a school roof a lifetime ago Tsuna knew as well. After that there had been no question of living a civilian life. Not with Tsuna, and Hayato, and the rest of his family all waiting for him to take his place at Tsuna’s
left hand. Not when he’d sworn his blade to Tsuna in a promise that didn’t end with death and
rebirth.

…

He’d transferred to the ninja academy a week after Tsuna had saved him. Hayato was already there,
as highly strung and easy to provoke as ever, and not long after Takeshi’s transfer, Mukuro had
somehow managed to insert himself into the class without anyone at all noticing. He was a year
behind the other students but it honestly hadn’t made much of a difference. Takeshi had always had a
talent for being dangerous.

His father hadn’t been surprised at his choice. A little sad perhaps, but not surprised.

“We’re too much alike, you and me. I’d hoped you might take after your mother, but you have a
Samurai’s soul.” He’d said, before putting a sword in Takeshi’s hand and showing him the forms for
Sigure Soen Ryuu, the forms Takeshi had no excuse for knowing, until his father decided to teach
him. It was interesting, he thought, that the bone masked Anbu were nowhere within sight while the
教学 was happening. It seemed his father was good at knowing when he was being watched.

It was less surprising than it should have been, how natural the ninja academy felt after the forced
artificiality of civilian life. He had no idea why his father would choose that. Not when he knew the
feel of a blade in his hand and a fight in the making. The ghostly shadows watched more closely
after Takeshi started ninja training, but after he failed to do anything suspicious they backed off
again. Takeshi honestly didn’t mind them that much, except that whenever they got too close they
always left him itching for a fight, which could be irritating.

Ninja academy suited him, even if he wasn’t quite a ninja in the same way as the other students, just
as he hadn’t been a civilian in the way his old classmates had been. He was after all his father’s son
right down to the bones, in both lives, and Yamamoto Tsuyoshi was samurai, not ninja, exiled from
the Land of Iron not long after Takeshi was born. He claimed Takeshi was too young to be told the
full story, but it had ended with him taking refuge in Konoha in exchange for laying down his sword
and living a civilian life.

Takeshi was really more samurai than ninja, but ninja and samurai had more in common than
samurai and civilians, and ninja school fitted in a way civilian school hadn’t. He hadn’t known how
much strain he’d been under, pretending to be normal, until suddenly he didn’t have to anymore.
Where his sudden shifts from easygoing laughter to predatory focus were seen as convenient instead
of frightening, where bloodlust was not just acceptable but encouraged.

He found himself fitting in easily. It was a talent of his, but somehow it felt more real more
meaningful when he was standing beside Tsuna’s warm blaze of orange flame, with his own blue
twined so deep into it they could never be separated, with Hayato on Tsuna’s other side all wild
unfettered devotion and brilliance, with all the colours of the rainbow, all of their hearts, wrapped up
in Tsuna’s strength, so that none of them would ever falter, strengthened each time one of them
remembered the life they had lived. Just as it should be.

Chapter End Notes

So yeah, Tsuyoshi is a samurai on the run, he took shelter in Konoha when Takeshi was
just a baby. Now Takeshi is studying to be a ninja but he still has a lot of samurai
ideology, from his father.
No Tsuyoshi doesn't remember and won't remember.
Oh and before I go any further, basically the memories are being triggered by the repetition or near repetition of significant events in their previous lives. For Chrome it was losing her organs again, for Tsuna it was a near death experience, for Takeshi it was Tsuna saving him from a fall (rather less intentional this time, because I just couldn't make Takeshi a suicidal six year old, this isn't that sort of story, so here it was just an accident), for Hayato it was just meeting Tsuna because... well Hayato.
Next chapter Tenten's pov on the Yamamoto family
Professionalism and psychopathy

Chapter Summary

Tenten thinks the Yamamotos are creepy. She's probably not wrong.

Chapter Notes

Tenten is very glad not to be in the same class and Takeshi and his fellow psycho friends.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Tenten had been utterly unsurprised when Yamamoto Takeshi transferred to the ninja academy. Honestly she was just surprised it had taken the little creep that long. No-one who smiled like that at the thought of violence could be happy living a civilian life.

The first time she met him he was three years old and she was five. His father had come in to get his sword repaired. Not his real sword, the one that had been passed down through the family for generations and could probably slice through steel bars with no problems. The spare one, the expendable one. It was a thing with samurai, really good swords were expensive, and it was better to use a cheaper one when damage seemed likely.

She was five and he was three, and thus he was far below her attention. Especially when she was far more interested in his father, she’d never met a real live samurai before. She’d been occupied with asking Yamamoto Tsuyoshi a thousand and one questions about swordsmanship and samurai principles, when little Takeshi, left to his own devices had somehow gotten his grubby fingers on one of the display swords.

A normal child would have messed around, maybe played at being a brave warrior, and almost definitely cut themselves, and caused hysteria and heart attacks on the behalf of the parents. Takeshi had held the sword like he’d been born carrying one, with an easy grin on his lips and a predators glint in his eyes. She’d seen that look, on veteran ninja that came into the store to restock their supplies. It was fucking disturbing to see it on a three year old. Tsuyoshi hadn’t panicked either, just smiled indulgently before gently lifting the sword from his son’s hand. As though what had just happened was entirely normal. He might be better at hiding it but he was as much of a freak as his son.

She supposed that it was probably a little hypocritical of her to comment. After all it had been pretty obvious by that point that she wasn’t going to follow her father into civilian trade. She liked using weapons far more than making or selling them, and her bloodlust had become unmanageable enough that her father bowed to the inevitable and signed her up to the ninja academy. But then, she was in ninja training, violence was appropriate for her. The bloodlust on her fellow academy kids never bothered her a bit, they were supposed to be bloodthirsty. The trouble with the Yamamoto’s was that they appeared to be civilians, that they lived as civilians, even when they really, really weren’t. It didn’t fit with Tenten’s view of the world.
In any case that was her first meeting with Yamamoto Takeshi, baby psychopath in the making. She’d seen him in the shop again every now and then, and absolutely nothing happened to alter her first impression of him. That boy was a killing waiting to happen. Other people might have said he was a sweet kid, and been shocked when he transferred to the academy, but she wasn’t. She knew he was just finally settling in to the place he belonged.

She’d always known Tsuyoshi wasn’t a real civilian. Her father had taken care to explain. Samurai weren’t ninja, but they weren’t civilians either, and in their own way they could be just as dangerous as ninja were. But she’d never really wondered just how it came to be that a foreign non-civilian was living in Konoha running a sushi restaurant. At least not until she’d listened in on her father and the older Yamamoto getting drunk together, and Tsuyoshi started telling a story that was most definitely not meant for five year old ears.

“It was an accident.” Tsuyoshi insisted.

“You accidentally slipped and fell on your boss’s wife, with your dick.” Tenten’s father was sceptical, as she knew he should be, she’d watched enough soap operas to know how that one went.

“I mean it’s not like I expected to get caught. The lord was meant to be out surveying his lands, and he left me in charge of the household guards. It’s not like it was even my idea. She came on to me. And I mean she was really really hot. If he hadn’t come home early, everything would have been fine.”

“But he did come home early.” Tousan pointed out mildly. Tsuyoshi just nodded morosely.

“Yes. It all kind of went downhill from there. That’s when he challenged me to a duel, which… was really quite poor decision making on his part. I’m not saying my decisions were brilliant either, but I’m not the only one who made poor choices. He knew I was a much better swordsman than him but he challenged me anyway. You could almost call it assisted suicide.” Tsuyoshi tried to look innocent, he was disturbingly good at it considering what he’d just said.

“I take it his family didn’t see it that way.”

“No, they really really didn’t. Anyway long story short, me and the lady ended up on the run from all the might of the lord’s family who were baying for our blood. Somewhere along the way I got her pregnant, nine months later and she dies giving birth to little Takeshi and I find myself in need of a safe environment to raise him.”

“Hang on you carried on fucking her after all that.” Tousan sounded scandalised. Tenten was reluctantly impressed, it took a lot to scandalise Tousan, who had in his wild youth been involved in the infamous pub crawl that had led to the orgy in the forest of death incident.

“Well the damage was done, it wasn’t like things could get much worse and she was still really really hot.” Tsuyoshi didn’t sound even a little bit sorry. Tousan meanwhile was looking thoughtful.

“You do know that story sounds an awful lot like the plot to Icha Icha Betrayals?” Tsuyoshi just smirked. “How do you think I got Konoha to give me sanctuary. I sold my story to Jiraiya of the sannin, and he used his influence to get me in.”

“Wait so, Icha Icha betrayals is actually your life story?” Tousan sounded impressed.

“Yes.” Tsuyoshi responded smugly.

“And did you really..?”
“Yep.” The smugness grew.

“And the..?”

“Yep” And grew some more.

“And the thing with the..?” Tousan actually sounded a little judgemental.

“Well… he might have embellished a bit. But the core elements were all true.” Tsuyoshi admitted.

Tousan just shook his head in disbelief. It was at that point that Tenten sneaked away. She had a lot to think about. Like the fact that all men were apparently perverts, and that it was possible to bribe your way into Konoha with the plot for a porno, and a willingness to overshare. And the fact that the mini psychopath might actually be the less insane of the father son duo.

She was forced to revise that last thought two years later, when Takeshi transferred to the ninja academy. She could think of no sane reason why Takeshi had started following a fluffy six year old named Sawada around like a pit viper on a leash. It was a bizzare thing to watch. Him and that other kid, the insane Nara, following Sawada around like if he told them to kill someone they’d only stop to bicker about whether that person should be diced or minced. The only conclusion she could draw was that they were all freaks and Sawada was the biggest freak of them all, to be able to control them.

Still at least she wasn’t related to any of them. It was almost enough to make her feel sorry for Lee, having that Hibari psycho for a cousin.

Chapter End Notes

Yes Jiraiya let Tsuyoshi into Konoha in exchange for the plot to Icha Icha Betrayals. In his defence it was an emergency, he had writers block, and his deadline was approaching.

And yes Hibari is Lee's cousin. No-one believes it when they tell them. I did it that way mostly for the sheer absurdity of it, and forcing Hibari to interact with Lee at family gatherings is comedy gold.
Illusions and deceit

Chapter Summary

Mukuro and Danzo meet. Mukuro is not happy. Danzo suffers.

Chapter Notes

Meet Mukuro, fucking with root is his new favourite hobby.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Mukuro reawakened in an unfortunately familiar situation. Unfortunate that was, for the people who put him there. He personally found it rather therapeutic, there had been bloody murder involved.

He had been strapped down to a lab table waiting for the “doctors”, to finish with him, when he had recovered his memories of the last time this had happened, along with everything else that had happened subsequently. There was something deeply therapeutic about suddenly waking up with superpowers after being tortured, and experimented on, Mukuro had already been able to vouch for that after the last time, and now he could safely say that some things only got better with repetition. Everyone in the room had been bloody smears on the wall before he managed to regain some self control, and decide what to do next.

He’d considered just killing them all, like he had the first time ‘round, but then he thought of his fluffy haired boss, and the disappointed expression he would level at Mukuro if he ended up on the run from the law again and he restrained himself. Besides, he was much stronger this time, he didn’t need to kill them to make their lives hell. In fact it might be more satisfying to play with them a bit. It wasn’t like they could do anything to him if he didn’t let them. He was a mist, he could do subtle.

…

Danzo admittedly brought out the worst in him. Fucking with his head so that he only remembered Mukuro existed when Mukuro found it convenient was the least of it. Mukuro fucked with his orders, he fucked with his perceptions, he fucked with Danzo’s memories, and best of all he did it so subtly that everyone, Danzo included, just put it down to the effects of old age.

It wasn’t just Danzo he messed with of course, although Danzo was his favourite target. He messed with root as a whole as well. He could have just walked out at any point after recovering his memories of course. The ninja didn’t know about mist flames and what they didn’t know about, they couldn’t guard against. If he’d wanted to he could have made it so that no-one in root even remembered his existence.

But he felt that would be rather missing an opportunity. There was a lot of potential in his situation. He had access to high level training for one thing, as well as an easy way in to all of root’s information files and mission reports. And on top of that, he suspected, if he played his cards right, he might just be able to take the organisation over. It would require a careful and complex game, but he was a Mist, he lived for that sort of game.
He couldn’t just stay in root either of course. He had places to go and people to reintroduce himself to. Dear Chrome, and the Decimo first on the list. He found Tsuna easy enough, root kept disturbingly up to date records on the village orphanage, and Tsuna was in there. He’d slipped out to check on him and was brought up short by sky flames that dragged him back in before he’d even realised Tsuna knew who he was. He would have been more annoyed, but he’d spent most of a lifetime with Tsuna’s sky wrapped around his flames and he’d felt… off, without them, he could only imagine how bad it must have been for Tsuna, missing all of his guardian bonds.

Chrome had been more than an issue. Tracking her down had been easy enough, but when he’d checked in she’d still been Nagi, had still not remembered a lifetime of sharing mind and flames and body with him, and it had been tricky getting close with the Uchiha clan in the way. That was ok though, he was patient, he could wait.

Meanwhile he’d inserted himself into the ninja academy to keep a closer eye on Tsuna and his morons, editing memories wherever necessary. He actually rather liked the ninja academy. Education but with enough violence to be amusing. He wondered idly if this was what mafia school had been like, he’d have to ask Gokudera, no Nara now, wouldn’t do to slip up, for a comparison.

He’d rather enjoyed ninja school, and no matter how many memories he had, his brain was still the brain of a six year old child, which meant he’d allowed himself to become distracted. He’d underestimated Danzo, and it wasn’t until far too late that he realised what Danzo had done to Chrome’s clan. Maybe it was the suddenness of it, or maybe just that he was too far down in roots hierarchy, information was need to know, and lowly trainees didn’t. Either way, Chrome lost her family, and was hurt again, and he’d wanted her to remember but not like that, he didn’t want her to hurt like that.

Guilt was an unfamiliar emotion to him. He didn’t like it. Still he couldn’t help but be happy that Chrome remembered. That she’d come back to him and twined their souls back together and taken her shelter under Tsunayoshi’s sky. It felt like a piece of the world slotting back into its proper place. He was so glad she didn’t blame him for what happened. He didn’t know what he would have done if she blamed him.

He spent more time at the academy after Chrome re-awakened, only dropping by root every now and then to renew his influence, and work on subverting their network, while at the same time messing with Danzo just enough to unbalance him without drawing suspicion. That time he’d managed to persuade him to drink cup after cup of coffee until he actually collapsed from a caffeine overdose was sheer genius. One of Chrome’s ideas that one, she always did have a vicious imagination.

Tsuna had shaken his head a little at his behaviour, but hadn’t outright told him to stop so Mukuro chose to take that as permission. The decimo probably had enough on his plate trying to rein in his more… obvious guardians, at least Mukuro and Chrome were being subtle, and therefore not his problem.

Chapter End Notes

Yeah so basically Mukuro was recruited to root, and halfway through the initial medical exam Mukuro remembered his past life. He then killed everyone in the room messily,
before pulling himself together, and using mist fuckery to make sure nobody noticed what he'd done. He is now plotting to subvert root and make them his minions.
Recruit 287, who secretly calls himself Sai, has noticed something odd about recruit 304, who refuses to answer to anything but Mukuro.

In which Mukuro is fucking with the heads of the whole of root and only Sai seems to notice.

Recruit 287 couldn’t get Recruit 304 out of his head. They were both root, they both answered to that control, and yet for some reason that control had no hold over Recruit 304. It was confusing in ways Recruit 287 didn’t have the language to describe. He didn’t understand how the chains that bound him and his comrades could weigh so lightly on the boy who insisted his name was Rokudo Mukuro, who refused to answer to his assigned designation.

Recruit 287 knew about names. He knew that they were important, he knew that they were forbidden. That they were for those who lived in the daylight, not for them, never for them, because names belonged to people, and root agents weren’t allowed to be people. He knew that if you had one, one that you remembered from before, one that you chose for yourself, one that one of your fellows gave you, you kept it secret. You held it close, deep in your heart and you hid it well, for fear it would be stolen like everything else.

“I’ll call you Sai” Shin had said, and Recruit 287 kept that name closer than his own heartbeat, as close as the fact he’d called Shin brother. He was Sai, he was a name, a person, and he didn’t dare let it show. He knew the rules, written on his heart in Shin’s blood.

Recruit 304 was different. It was like he had never learned that rule, or maybe just never realised that it could apply to him. He had named himself and he refused to hide it, refused to bend. Sai knew how that story was supposed to end, he’d seen a dozen and more stubborn recruits who refused to bend, had seen them broken for it every one, and yet there was Mukuro who refused to be recruit 304, who defied all the rules and somehow got away with it. He called into question everything Root stood for and no-one but Sai even realised. Sai didn’t know what to think, or feel about him.

It had taken him an embarrassingly long time to figure out that Mukuro had been messing with people’s heads, influencing them, that sometimes what people knew about him changed, and sometimes people didn’t remember him at all, that sometimes they would have training and he wouldn’t be there, and no-one would register anything odd. Sai suspected even his own memories of the boy might not be entirely accurate, especially the early ones.

It took so long mainly because Sai couldn’t believe that he was seeing and remembering things that his trainers were not. They were supposed to be more experienced, more knowledgeable, if there was something irregular and they didn’t comment on it, then it must have meant he just didn’t have
the clearance. The trainers knew what was happening and he didn’t, and he had been there long enough to know not to ask. Except the trainers didn’t know, and Sai did, and nothing in his training had ever covered that possibility.

It wasn’t just the trainers either. It seemed as though Sai was the only person in the whole organisation that noticed how Mukuro came and went, was there and then not. He didn’t know why. He maybe should have told a higher up, Mukuro could be anyone, could be a dangerous infiltrator and a threat to the security of Konoha. He should have told someone, but he didn’t. Partly because initiative really wasn’t encouraged among root operatives, and he honestly wasn’t sure he’d even be believed, but it wasn’t just that, not really. It was because deep down, in the part of him that was named Sai, that had been Shin’s brother, he looked at Mukuro, at how he manipulated, and deceived, and refused to bend, at the way he refused to let the organisation take anything that mattered from him, and he didn’t want to turn him in. There was a part of Sai that admired Mukuro, for doing what he never could, for being what he only wished he could be, and so when it came down to it he said nothing of what he saw.

Sai had bowed his head after Shin’s death, had been the perfect agent in all but that one thing. Feeling hurt too much, defiance had too high a price, and Sai barely knew what it would mean to not be Root. And yet he held his silence on the things he knew Mukuro was doing to the organisation he served, he kept it as close a secret as his own name, and didn’t even blink as Mukuro moved in and out of their lives as subtle and impossible to pin down as the mists that rose over Konoha’s trees in winter.

And so things stood in an odd kind of equilibrium, an unspoken recognised conspiracy of silence. Right up until Mukuro upset that, the same way he seemed to upset just about everything Sai had thought he knew. Mukuro had suddenly taken an interest in him and it had been enough of a shock that Sai nearly let a visible reaction slip out before he caught it.

It had started with Sai’s new technique. He had learned to animate his drawings, to make his imagination take flight in ways that would never have been allowed if it didn’t have useful combat applications, and for some reason that had drawn Mukuro’s attention in a way Sai had never done before. He had looked very long and hard at Sai’s drawings, and then he’d laughed, out loud, in that way that no other root agent ever dared to.

““I never fooled you at all did I?” He said to Sai, with a look in his eyes that was half dark amusement, half speculation. “You kept quiet anyway though didn’t you baby mist?”

“It didn’t seem like speaking up would be a wise move.” Sai admitted, trusting to the strange perception warping field Mukuro seemed to have, to hide their conversation. Mukuro had laughed again, Sai was no expert on the subject, but he thought there was something vicious in that laugh.

“True enough.” Mukuro had smiled, “Smart baby mist. I can work with that.”

And that was how Sai found out about dying will flames.

Chapter End Notes

I think I just accidentally gave Sai mist flames. Mukuro has a new minion to amuse himself with. Now that I think about it, it kind of fits.
Sai is about two years older than Mukuro and the rest of the guardians. Mukuro still calls him baby mist because Mukuro has much more experience.
And yeah, sorry Shin was already dead before Mukuro arrived, I needed him dead for Sai's character development. I think next chapter might be Tsuna though, just because I need a broader angle view on what's happened so far, and Tsuna and Naruto are the centres of everything.
Love and kindness

Chapter Summary

Tsuna wakes up in a world that is distressingly like Reborn's idea of paradise. It's actually not that bad. He wonders if Reborn has brainwashed him.

Chapter Notes

In which Tsuna tries to navigate being a small child again, putting his family back together, voluntarily embarking on a career of violence, and being a decent human being to the one person everyone hates.

The feeling of dying was unlike any other sensation there was. Tsuna was uniquely well positioned to make judgements on the subject. He’d died more times than anyone else he knew after all.

Most of them had only been temporary deaths of course. The kind that were inflicted by dying will bullets and only meant to last for an instant. They had been more than enough to make the sensation of dying and being resurrected an old familiar friend though. They had been more than enough to make him keenly aware of each and every reason he had, to not stay dead. Maybe that was why he’d been reincarnated, his soul too used to clinging to life to just let go when his body finally fell beyond repair.

There had been two deaths that had been more than temporary, that had more than a moment’s hold over him. The first was so carefully planned and executed, so carefully that he didn’t even remember it because time itself had been rewritten by the time the plan had fully played out. The second though, the second hadn’t been planned at all. The second had been a haze of fire, and gunfire, and blood. The second had meant more deaths than his own, had been chaos, and disaster, and no way out. He didn’t like remembering the second. He really hadn’t expected to wake up after that one.

But he had. Whether it was some weird as yet undiscovered side function of the Vongola rings, a consequence of his own soul’s excessive experience with resurrection, or just a bizarre coincidence, he had been reincarnated. He had been reincarnated and he remembered.

It had felt like the universe’s cruel joke when he first reawoke, shivering and shaking and coldcoldcold in a way that ran far deeper than the chill from the almost drowning that had triggered the memories. He was cold because he was there and his guardians were gone, and they had died, and he had died, and he had woken up alone, no bright colours wrapped around the orange flame of his soul.

He hadn’t been doing so well for a while there. He’d spent three weeks with a high fever from the drowning, and worried the hell out of the orphanage staff in the process, and when he’d finally recovered he’d been quiet and withdrawn. Lonely in a way none of his fellow orphans, children and strangers that they were, could ease.
It took probably longer than it should have for Tsuna to pull himself together. If Reborn had been there he probably would have shot him for moping. In the end it was the thought that maybe he wasn’t alone after all that dragged him out of it. After all it had been a near death experience that reactivated his memories. If his friends had been reincarnated they would probably be small children just like him. It was entirely possible they just hadn’t remembered yet, after all, how many small children underwent near death experiences.

Of course that was before he’d figured out exactly what sort of world he’d been born into. When he worked it out it was all he could do to keep from letting out a high pitched squeak. It was like the mafia, but in public, and legal, and no-one saw anything wrong with it. He wondered just how badly Reborn had managed to screw with his head over the years that a part of him found that reassuring. At least now, if his guardians got out of hand, he wouldn’t have to try and cover it up.

Actually. If he’d been reincarnated, that meant he wasn’t Vongola tenth anymore. That meant the paperwork they incurred was no longer his responsibility, it was the job of the hokage and other senior village officials. Maybe this new life wouldn’t be so bad after all.

He’d signed up for the academy mainly because he suspected his guardians would end up gravitating towards it. It was after all the most similar thing to their previous jobs available in this universe. If he wanted them back, the academy was the place to start looking. Besides, after years in the mafia his responses just didn’t fit in to a civilian life anymore and it wasn’t like he’d ever had any burning ambitions before he’d had criminal greatness thrust upon him. He might as well play to his strengths, and thanks to Reborn, most of those strengths were really only useful for a ninja.

He’d signed up to the academy and it had paid off immediately, because he’d found Hayato. That had been a good day, because Hayato had remembered as soon as he’d seen Tsuna. Having Hayato’s storm red flames woven back into his own where they belonged had helped chase away some of the coldness he’d been plagued by ever since he’d woken up alone. (He was never going to tell Hayato how much those two years alone had hurt, he would never forgive himself.) And the day had only got better because ninja academy lessons were easy. It was some combination of the way Reborn’s lessons had stuck, the fact that his flames were unsealed this time around, and of course the fact that he had the memories of a grown man, but he was actually doing quite well in lessons.

And he was popular. That was probably down to the unsealed flames again, because there was no other good explanation for why his classmates seemed so drawn to him. He, Dame Tsuna, was the class idol. It was surreal, he wasn’t sure he liked it. On the one hand it was better than being beaten up for his lunch money, (not that Hayato would have allowed that), but on the other it was more than a little creepy. Still, if Hayato’s possessive glaring wasn’t enough to deter them, he suspected nothing would so he would just have to learn to live with it. He wondered if this was how Kyouko had felt back in Nami middle.

Hayato wasn’t the only one of his guardians that had shown up in his academy class, although most of them were seemingly oblivious to their past lives at least at first, with the glaring exception of Mukuro who had shown up halfway through the year with all his memories in place and casually inserted himself into the class without so much as a word of explanation. Tsuna knew better than to ask. As long as he didn’t ask he wouldn’t have to deal with whatever it was, and judging by Mukuro’s smirk it was something he really didn’t want to deal with.

Getting his guardians back, or at least seeing the opportunity to get them back, eased the ache inside him to the point where he felt comfortable stretching out his flame sense again. Which was how he spotted the baby sky. Naruto in the year above, village pariah, dead last of his class, brimming with untapped power. It should have been like looking in a mirror of his younger self, but he knew Naruto vaguely from the orphanage and honestly he put Tsuna more in mind of a strange combination of
pre-mafia Takeshi, and five year old Lambo. Lambo’s desperate attention seeking loudness, combined with the mask of happiness that had nearly driven Takeshi to suicide.

It wasn’t a good situation, and Tsuna wasn’t entirely sure how to fix it. Naruto had moved out of the orphanage when he’d enrolled in the academy, and Tsuna had no real excuses for interacting with him, especially since he had never spoken more than a few words to the boy when they’d actually lived under the same roof. He still felt bad about that. No matter how badly he’d been hurting, he should have seen the state Naruto was in. He had no real excuse to interact with him, and it wasn’t all that long ago that Naruto had been betrayed by a group of kids pretending to be his friends. Tsuna remembered exactly how that felt, and if anyone had tried to approach him out of the blue, after that had happened he would have never let them close.

So Tsuna didn’t push, he stood back, and did what he could from a distance, and let Naruto try an handle his own problems. And it paid off, he could see the way Naruto’s natural sky charisma, latent though it was, slowly undercut the pre-existing prejudices of the people around him. Things weren’t perfect, but Tsuna could see the way some of Naruto’s class were starting to centre around him, and he knew that if he, an active sky intervened at this point it might disrupt that process entirely. So he kept his distance and watched, and then the Uchiha had been murdered, and Chrome was newly reawaken and grieving, and Tsuna was too caught up with the problems of his own family to think about Naruto.

Chapter End Notes

Yeah Tsuna didn't handle the Naruto situation very well. In his defence he's between the ages of two and six over the course of this chapter and no matter what memories he has that means a little kid's brain and ability to make good decisions. He's also dealing with a lot of stuff himself, starting with thinking he's lost everyone he loves, then realising he hasn't, then realising they don't all remember him, then helping Chrome through the massacre of her whole family. At the same time as adjusting to a radically different culture, and dealing with the memories of himself and everyone else dying messily. He really wasn't doing ok for a while there.

It's not that he doesn't feel sorry for Naruto, and he does try to help a bit, but he doesn't know him that well and Tsuna is very family oriented.

He's also slightly worried that the presence of an active sky might disrupt the subconscious pull Naruto's been exerting over his classmates to make them like him better, and thus accidentally make things worse. He's not entirely wrong.
Influence and charisma

Chapter Summary

Naruto might not be the most observant ninja in the world but he has good instincts and his instincts are screaming that he and Tsuna are more than a little alike.

Chapter Notes

In which Naruto learns to use his sky flames to influence people the same way he learns everything else, with sheer willpower and a total ignorance of theory.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Naruto would freely admit he wasn’t the most observant person in the world, usually he didn’t care. No-one ever paid much attention to him, why should he bother paying attention to them. Especially when so much of himself was taken up just trying to get them to look at him, because so few people ever did, they looked past him, or through him, or over him, but they never looked at him. Sometimes, in darker moments he wondered if he was even real, if someone who no-one really saw, could really count as a person.

He didn’t let himself think like that too often. It only made him miserable, and he couldn’t pull off the cool brooding look the way Sasuke bastard could. It was much easier to just take out his frustrations on the village as a whole by wreaking merry havoc on all their lives. At least when they were shouting at him for pranking them they were shouting at him. Admittedly not at his most socially acceptable behaviours but still, it was about something he’d done, and enjoyed, not… whatever it was that made people turn away when he tried to speak to them, and usher their children away when he tried to play. He didn’t know what that was about but he didn’t like it.

He wasn’t the most observant person in the world, so it was odd, the way he’d started to notice one of the younger kids at the orphanage. Sawada Tsunayoshi his name was, and Naruto had first started to notice him after he’d fallen in the river and nearly drowned, which admittedly was the sort of thing that did draw attention.

It was more than that though. Maybe it was the way that after that Tsuna had changed in ways that were hard to describe. Sometimes, it felt like he was as lonely as Naruto himself was. He’d never been an especially sociable child but after the river the look in his eyes… well Naruto hadn’t seen it outside the mirror, or the faces of a few of the more broken adult shinobi.

Part of him had almost wanted to approach Tsuna, had thought that maybe if they were lonely together it might not hurt so much. But then he’d started at the Ninja academy and his life had suddenly been busier than it had ever been. There had been a thousand and one things to learn and none of it came easy. His teachers didn’t want to help, and his classmates avoided him, and it took everything he had just trying to keep up, and somehow in the busy chaos that had taken over his life the thought of a small boy with eyes as lonely as his had been pushed to the back of his mind.

And then that mess with Hibachi had happened and Naruto’s enthusiasm for making friends had
taken a heavy hit. By the time he’d been willing to take a risk on people again, Tsuna had started the academy himself, and the loneliness in his eyes had vanished. Tsuna had friends now, good ones. There was Shikamaru’s cousin Hayato, who once managed to blow up his classroom so spectacularly that it caused structural damage to the whole academy and everyone had ended up having to take their lessons outside for a week. There was Takeshi who was better with a sword than the final year students, and Ryouhei who was louder than Naruto himself, and Ryouhei’s twin sister Kyouko who was the prettiest girl in her year. Not as pretty as Sakura chan of course but still very pretty. There were others too, lots of others, Tsuna’s whole year seemed to love him. Naruto told himself he wasn’t jealous. How could it be so easy for Tsuna to banish that loneliness that still echoed back at Naruto whenever he looked in a mirror. Tsuna’s friends were always having fun and causing trouble together. They were always there to support each other and Naruto wanted.

If he’d known it would be that easy he’d have started wanting like that a long time ago. Not that he hadn’t wanted before of course, but it wasn’t until he’d seen Tsuna show how it was done that he’d wanted in that particular impossible to describe way that seemed to draw people to him. He didn’t know exactly how it worked and he wasn’t quite stupid enough to ask an adult but it worked. He’d wanted, and gradually, over time his classmates had stopped hating him, had stopped ignoring him, had actually laughed when he played his pranks. If he hadn’t seen Tsuna do it he would have thought it was just because they were getting used to him. But it was more than that. He knew that, somehow, without words or reason.

He wasn’t the class idol the way Tsuna was, but the way the social structure of his class shaped itself around him, the way his behaviour formed the keystone of all of their interactions, that was more like Tsuna’s effect than most people could see. They might not all like him, but every one of them saw him. At the academy at least he was never invisible. It wasn’t like Tsuna’s tight knit friendships and wild popularity, but as time went by and he became an integral part of his class rather than just the outsider, he started to gain friends of his own, Kiba who would pull pranks with him, Chouji who would share his lunch with him, Shikamaru who would sigh and say troublesome before explaining Naruto’s homework, Shino who always looked to him first when it came time to do groupwork. As that happened he found that he was less and less jealous of what Tsuna had and more hopeful of what he could have for himself.

He might have tried to approach Tsuna at that point, but whenever he mentioned him Shikamaru started twitching, and muttering about cults, and evil cousins, and then Chouji would give Naruto a look for setting him off, and it just never seemed to be worth upsetting the status quo. Not when Tsuna looked perfectly happy where he was, and Naruto was getting there.

Chapter End Notes

I need to point out that Naruto isn't exactly making people like him with sky flames. He's just making himself impossible to ignore. In effect Naruto has learned a technique that makes him the centre of attention. The world trembles. He now has friends because after paying attention to him for a while they decided they quite liked him. They may or may not be the founding members of cult Naruto. Also Naruto is not actually Sky active yet. He's latent, but on the verge of going active, so he can use some of the more subtle skills like sky attraction, but not the magic flames you can fly with.
Chapter Summary

The good news is... reincarnation is real. The bad news is... fucking magic ninjas. Typical. Hana really shouldn't have been surprised.

Chapter Notes

Of course Hana has to deal with Sawada fucking Tsunayoshi in the afterlife. Clearly one life wasn't enough punishment. At least she gets Kyouko back.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Hana didn’t know why she thought the next life would be peaceful, because clearly judging by the pattern of past events things only ever escalated. She’d thought things couldn’t get more ridiculous after magic flame mafia. Clearly she was wrong. She’d tempted fate and now she was being punished for it. Fucking magic ninja. Typical.

And of course Kyouko felt the need to sign up to become one of the magic ninja. She wanted to keep an eye on her brother, who had joined the magic ninja because he was a fighting obsessed monkey (Who failed to see that coming? Not Hana. She’d been expecting that announcement since she’d first heard magic ninja existed).

She didn’t even know why she was surprised. Last time ‘round Kyouko had become a career criminal to keep an eye on her brother, at least her current career path was legal, if only because the magic ninja had terrorised everyone else into agreeing that murder for hire was an acceptable business practice. It could be seen as progress. In a way. Of course Hana was really in no position to be casting stones. After all she had followed Kyouko into both the mafia and the magic ninja academy for much the same reason.

And of fucking course fucking Sawada Tsunayoshi was there, Sawada fucking Tsunayoshi was always there. It was like one of those universal, or multi-universal as it turned out laws of reality. Whenever life took a turn for the utterly insane, and/or disturbingly lethal, Sawada Tsunayoshi would somehow be right in the middle of it. Looking innocent. Like a fluffy bunny rabbit. With an innocent look in its eyes and an entire city reduced to rubble in the background, on fire.

Anyway to summarise, reincarnation was real, second chances did happen, and they were exactly like the first chances right down to the terrible decisions she and everyone she knew made, and the inexplicable fire based superpowers they had collectively decided not to tell the ninja authorities about. Typical. Hana wanted a refund. She probably wasn’t going to get one.

At least this time around Hana got mind control powers, she liked the mind control powers. Mind control powers could be useful, especially since it looked like she was still stuck with Sawada Tsunayoshi and his disturbing personality cult, and all the trouble that came with them. If she’d had mind control powers the last time round maybe she could have kept them all from getting killed. Or at least delayed it a bit. That was a plus for reincarnation, along with the whole, not being dead thing.
Of course the downside was she’d had to start all over again from childhood. Hana hated children, a lot, and she hated being one even more. She hadn’t liked it the first time around when she’d been an actual child and she definitely didn’t like it this time when she had the memories of a full grown adult. She had not been impressed, and she’d been perfectly willing to take it out on her new family. She hadn’t quite managed the level of notoriety that the explosives monkey had managed over in the Nara clan compound, but she had managed to give her clan a healthy respect for her acid tongue, and vengeful streak. Even cousin Ino wouldn’t mess with her, and Ino was one of nature’s interfering busybodies. Hana considered that success.

She had remembered her past life in the middle of practicing a meditation for her clan jutsu, one of the mind control ones. It had been a much less melodramatic way than most of the others had managed at least. Anyway she’d remembered at about the age of three and the first thing she’d done was track down Kyoko. It didn’t pay to leave Kyoko unsupervised. The last time she’d done that Kyuko had ended up transported to a dystopian future to play the damsel in distress in a fight for the future of the world. She’d thought it would be fine to leave Kyoko alone with Haru for a while, she’d been wrong. Never let it be said that Hana couldn’t learn from her mistakes. Clearly Kyoko needed to be supervised at all times, no matter what. Hana shuddered to think what sort of trouble she might have got in before Hana woke up.

At least finding her had been easy enough, thanks to her monkey of an older brother. All she had to do was listen for the shouting and then follow him home. There had been a brief false start when she’d accidentally tracked down a jounin in green spandex who was almost as extreme as Kyoko’s brother. That had been mildly traumatic. She hadn’t realised there could be more than one person that loud in the world at a time. But she’d tried again and her second attempt got results. She’d found Kyoko in full possession of her memories, and miraculously in one piece.

Seeing Kyoko again had been the highlight of her month. Of course that was when she’d found out about Kyoko’s plan to become a magic ninja, but you couldn’t have everything. Find Kyoko, find out about Kyoko’s terrible plans for the future, tell Kyoko off, go along with her plans anyway. It was a familiar routine.

Starting at the academy had of course brought them back into contact with Sawada Tsunayoshi and his merry band of psychopaths, but hey, Hana had already spent one lifetime dealing with them, she could deal with that, it was familiar territory. Not that she was pleased to see them or anything like that, but at least if this life was going to be as insanely surreal as the last one it would be the kind of insanity she was used to handling. She hadn’t missed them, it was just nice to have some constancy in her life, lives, whatever. Besides Kyoko would have been sad if Haru hadn’t been here. Hana could deal with almost anything life threw at her, magic ninja, no problem, Sawada Tsunayoshi and his psycho friends, old hat, Kyoko being sad, not a chance. Hana wasn’t ashamed. Everyone had their weaknesses, Hana was weak to Kyoko’s sad face. It was important to be aware of these things about yourself.

In any case this new world might be crazy but the important things were as they should be. She had Kyoko back, Sawada and co were hanging around making nuisances of themselves as usual, Kyoko’s brother still had the world’s most surreal crush on her, and she was allowed to throw knives at the small children in her clan if they annoyed her and call it training. And hey bonus, her new career was at least technically legal, and she now had mind control powers. Life could be a lot worse.
The Yamanaka clan finds Hana deeply intimidating. They swap sob stories with the Nara about their demon children. The Nara usually win though, because at least Hana doesn't like explosives.

Fun fact, aside from Tsuna, Hana is the one with the clearest memory of their actual death. Most of the others find that part is a bit fuzzy on the details.
Friendship and family

Chapter Summary

Ino's cousin Hana is a bitch. Ino will make her suffer somehow.

Chapter Notes

Ino is really really hoping they don't try and make an inoshikacho team out of Hana's year. She's not the only one.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Ino’s cousin was a bitch. An absolute, irredeemable, evil, bitch. Ino was pretty sure the adults of the clan secretly agreed with her on this, but they still refused to take sides. It was irritating. The fact that she was best friends with Sakura’s cousin in no way mitigated this, in some ways it might actually make it worse. And the very worst thing was Sakura couldn’t agree with Ino that Hana was a bitch, because that would make Sakura’s cousin sad, and Ino was obviously far too reasonable a person to make her choose between friendship and family. Honestly Ino herself wasn’t too keen on the idea of making Kyouko sad, the girl had the wide tearful eyes and wobbling lower lip down to a fine art. Her tears were weapons grade. Ino still wasn’t sure why she was best friends with Hana.

For as long as Ino could remember, she and Hana had never got on. Ino had been a social butterfly, while Hana had been an abrasive loner, Ino liked to be in charge, while Hana… also liked to be in harge. They had fought, constantly, viciously, it was the stuff of clan legend. And then at about the age of three Hana had got weird. Suddenly she was spending all her time with some civilian girl named Sasagawa Kyouko and her crazy brother. And she listened to Kyouko, and was nice to her. If Kyouko hadn’t been one of those people that are impossible to hate Ino would have hated her guts. It just wasn’t fair. Of course losing her cousin’s attention had led her into making friends with Sakura, which was… quite possibly one of the best things that ever happened to Ino, but still. It was a matter of principle. Sakura was an amazing friend though. They did fight it was true, but they also did other stuff, they played ninja, and braided each other’s hair and had sleepovers, it was way better than spending time with Hana had ever been. But still, the way her cousin no longer had time for her hurt.

Attending the academy was a double edged sword. On the one hand it meant she got to spend time with Sakura, on the other hand meant she got to listen to Shikamaru’s paranoid theories about the cult that Sawada Tsunayoshi in the year below was running. A cult that, incidentally his cousin, her cousin, her cousin’s best friend who happened to also be Sakura’s cousin, and her cousin’s best friend’s brother, were all a part of. The problem was Shikamaru was smart enough to make his conspiracy theories sound uncomfortably reasonable even when they were completely insane.

She’d found herself watching her cousin and taking notes for her crazy friend. It was slightly creepy how so many people seemed to follow Sawada around, but her cousin was just as bitchy to Sawada as she was to everyone else. If Ino was going to put money on it she’d guess it was Kyouko who was the cult leader. Except that she couldn’t say that because that would upset Sakura, and upset Sakura was angry Sakura, and angry Sakura meant screaming arguments that cousin Hana would not
fail to comment on later. Just because Hana was creepily well behaved around her best friend didn’t
mean everyone always had to be perfect. Fighting was perfectly normal.

In any case her cousin was a bitch, for a lot of reasons, but mainly for leaving her alone in charge of
Akimichi Lambo. Hana had taken one look, said she didn’t sign up to deal with that snot nosed brat, and ran off to parts unknown. Leaving Ino to entertain their guest, who was really supposed to be
Hana’s guest because he was in Hana’s year and would thus form part of Hana’s Inoshikacho team. At least that was the theory. In practice, well, a lot of people were hoping it wouldn’t come to that. Actually that year’s Inoshikacho team was a slightly horrifying thing to contemplate even in theory, because it would involve combining Shikamaru’s demon cousin Hayato, of the home made explosive tags and terrifying temper, her superbitch of a cousin Hana who lived to provoke people, and Akimichi Lambo, the worlds most hyperactive, attention seeking Akimichi. There was no moderating influence on that team. Ino really hoped the elders came to their senses before team assignments, if ever there was a time for exceptions to be made it was now. For the sake of the village’s structural intergrity.

Anyway Akimichi Lambo who was supposed to be her cousin’s guest, but had somehow ended up her problem. Why oh why was she stuck supervising the one Akimichi in the universe who couldn’t be entertained by just sitting quietly with a bag of chips. She seriously considered just leaving him to it and letting him run wild but then Choujo would give her the disappointed look, for not looking after his poor helpless sickly cousin and she just couldn’t handle that.

Personally she didn’t buy it. Lambo was about as helpless and sickly as Maito Gai and a whole lot less easy to deal with. As far as she could see the reason Lambo wasn’t putting on any weight was because he wouldn’t sit still for five seconds at a time. But the Akimichi were convinced that he had some sort of metabolic disorder and they were all very worried so everyone had to be nice to the spoilt little brat.

Who was fully aware of that fact and in no way ashamed to take advantage, and her cousin was a grade A bitch for leaving her with him. Even if she had sent that Aburame girl Haru to take over after a few hours. That was still three solid hours trying to keep the brat from destroying the compound, and dealing with his screaming temper tantrums whenever she refused him sweets. Honestly he was only meant to be a year younger than she was, why couldn’t he act his age. Still she thought darkly to herself. It could be worse. She could have Nara Hayato there as well.

Chapter End Notes

Yeah Lambo is totally taking advantage of his opportunity to be five years old again. He liked being five, and now he has an excuse to act that age again. Tsuna and co are just closing their eyes and hoping he gets bored eventually.
Chapter Summary

There is something important that Hibari can't quite remember. It's causing a dangerous amount of frustration.

Chapter Notes

The family really didn't know what to make of Kyouya and Lee and their unfortunate hobby of trying to beat each other unconscious, but trying to keep them apart didn't end well for anyone.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was a source of perpetual confusion that a family as civilian as theirs could produce not one but two children so obviously unsuited to peaceful civilian life. Lee was... enthusiastic about violence to say the least, and as for Kyouya, well no-one was sure what went on in that child's head. They didn’t know where he got the tonfas, or learned to use them, but after the third time he'd beaten up a drunk chunin for “disturbing the peace”, the ninja academy had really been the only place they could send him.

Kyouya had quite liked the ninja academy, there was fighting, and weapons training, and once he’d beaten up a few of his classmates no-one dared disturb his naps. It was if nothing else, a good place to establish his authority. His classmates were... irritating though, annoying in ways he didn’t quite have words for, and he knew there should be a word for them. Tetsuya said not to worry about it, that it would come to him eventually. Kyouya had responded with a snarl and a snake fast strike of his tonfa.

Hibari Kyouya was utterly convinced there was a word for his fellow students. It itched at the back of his mind and he just couldn’t, quite, remember. It was infuriating, it made him want to fight, to attack, to do... something he couldn’t remember what. There was something he’d forgotten, something important and whenever he tried to pin it down it escaped him.

It was worse around his cousin. There was something disturbingly, disconcertingly familiar about his cousin, beyond just the familiarity of having grown up together. Cousin Lee reminded him of someone else, someone who was also deeply irritating and yet somehow impressive at the same time. He didn’t like it. He responded as he usually responded to things he didn’t like. With non-civilian levels of violence.

Both sets of parents had been rather bemused by the first time little Kyouya, age three, and little Lee age five had managed to beat each other to a pulp. To the point where neither of them was capable of moving. Bemused and rather worried, but after the incident had repeated itself a few times and they’d failed to give each other any truly serious injuries they adapted, and just tried to ensure the cousins meetings didn’t occur around any breakable items. Keeping them separated, wasn’t worth the violent temper tantrums from Kyouya for keeping him away from a fight, or the devastated looks of betrayal
from Lee for keeping him away from his adorably youthful cousin. Cousin Lee might be annoying, and familiar in ways that itched at the back of his head, but he was also the only decent challenge available from his pathetically weak family. There was no way he was going to let them keep him separated from Lee.

He’d turned up for his first day at ninja academy, and met someone who was even more uncomfortably familiar than Cousin Lee. In fact if it weren’t absolutely absurd he would say that Sasagawa Ryouhei was the person that Lee reminded him of. Which was ridiculous because he’d never met the boy before in his life. It didn’t help that Ryouhei had quickly latched on to him as though they were related. The more time he spent in Ryouhei’s general vicinity the more uncanny the resemblance to his cousin became, not physically, but in terms of personality and fighting style. Hibari was torn between wanting to ensure the two never met, for the sake of peace in Konoha, and deliberately organising a three way spar on the academy training grounds. Kusakabe could make sure they weren’t disturbed. He was useful that way, even if his understanding of Kyouya’s moods did border on the supernatural.

Besides, it was the ninja academy, it wasn’t like fighting was discouraged. In the end he’d decided to introduce them. The ensuing spar had been more than worth the disruption and had ended with all three of them collapsed in exhaustion, while Ryouhei muttered something about extreme battles, and Lee had groaned about youthful training. It was most satisfying. Attending the academy had definitely been one of his better decisions.

And then there was Sawada Tsunayoshi. Something about Sawada Tsunayoshi made the itching at the back of his brain intensify to almost unbearable levels and yet he found he couldn’t just ignore or avoid him. Something about Sawada just kept drawing him back. Maybe it was the way Sawada looked at him, as though he knew Kyouya better than he knew himself, or maybe it was a different manifestation of the effect Sawada had on all their classmates. He was… compelling, in ways that no-one seemed quite able to ignore.

He shouldn’t have been so interesting. He was almost suspiciously average in his combat abilities, and classwork, he wasn’t a prankster, or a troublemaker, it was as though he was going out of his way to be unremarkable. But there was something, a spark of predator in him that Kyouya couldn’t help but notice. Of course it didn’t help that he had Nara Hayato following him around. Nara Hayato was a troublemaker, as well as a genius, and a well above average fighter, the fact that he deferred to Tsuna was, well it undermined the innocent act a bit. And then Yamamoto Takeshi transferred in, and he might have been more subtle than Nara but he still clearly followed Tsunayoshi’s lead, and no-one who’d seen him with a sword in hand would ever call him average.

The years passed and more and more students were drawn ever closer into Tsunayoshi’s orbit the itching familiarity at the back of Kyouya’s mind became more and more unbearable. It left him… irritable, even his cousin had started to be wary of his moods. It didn’t help that he was increasingly sure that Tsuna and his friends knew exactly what the problem was.

In their final year at the academy the village was invaded. It was one of the best days of Kyouya’s life. Finally he had an excuse to drown his irritation and frustration in the blood of the petty annoyances that surrounded him. When the alarms sounded he’d ignored the academy instructors trying to urge the students towards the shelters and struck out in search of victims. Tsuna had followed him by the trail of battered sound nin he left behind him.

It was at he was smashing his tonfa into the jaw of an enemy chuunin that a word had come to him. “Herbivore.” He spat, before moving on to his next target. Herbivore, there was something so right about the word, they were herbivores. Weak, crowding herbivores, he wanted to… bite them to death. He felt a warmth at his back that a deeply buried part of him identified as Sky flames, and
something slotted into place like it had always been there. He *remembered* now, he was a carnivore, and he had a pack, and Sawada Tsunayoshi was the heart of it. Memories of cloud flames, and battle, and a small fluffy beacon of orange fire, always stronger than he seemed to be.

He turned to look Tsuna in the eyes and he *knew*. His Sky already remembered.

“Herbivore.” He said clearly, and with menace, “You didn’t tell me we’d lived before.” The squeak his Sky let out at his tone was far more satisfying than he’d ever admit. It was good to know some things didn’t change. He smiled with all his teeth, “I’ll bite you to death.”

Chapter End Notes

Hibari finds his cousin very annoying, but he is also an interesting challenge to fight so he is still Hibari’s favourite relative. Lee and Ryouhei get on very well indeed. And yes Hibari and Ryouhei end up on the same genin team. Hibari and Lee are cross cousins rather than parallel cousins, hence the different surnames, and their families are very close. They were close to start with and then they bonded over their insane offspring.
Youth and determination

Chapter Summary

Lee worries about his cousin sometimes, with good reason. Sometimes it turns out, his cousin has even better reasons to worry about him.

Chapter Notes

In which Lee is a good older cousin, and Hibari is, against all logic an even better younger cousin.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Cousin Kyouya wasn’t quite like anyone else Lee had ever known. Not that he thought that was a bad thing of course. In fact his cousin was practically bursting with youthful energy, as demonstrated by the way he challenged Lee to a most youthful spar every time their families held a gathering. He really didn’t understand why their parents found their manly bonding activities so distressing. Unless it was the property damage. But it wasn’t as though any of it had been that hard to fix. He’d even helped with the repairs so he knew that for a fact. Kyouya was probably Lee’s favourite cousin, even if it was unyouthful to pick favourites amongst family members.

But still, cousin Kyouya was… different, and Lee had worried a little about that. Sometimes people didn’t really understand his cousin and he’d been concerned that Kyouya might have trouble finding youthful friends to share his academy experience with. He was the older cousin after all, it was his job to worry.

As it turned out though, there was absolutely no reason to worry. His cousin had made friends almost immediately. That much was obvious from the bruises and satisfied grin he wore when Lee walked him home from the academy. His cute little cousin had found a youthful friend to spar with. Lee was so proud.

He was even more proud when Cousin Kyouya had decided to introduce him to his friends. That wasn’t how Kyouya had said it of course, because Kyouya didn’t explain things that way. Kyouya had framed it as a three way sparring session with one of his classmates, but Lee had known Kyouya since he was a tiny homicidal toddler, and he knew what Kyouya had meant. And Kyouya’s friends were so adorably youthful. Little Kusakabe kun was so carefully efficient in diverting the attention of teachers and students alike so that they could train uninterrupted, and it was so cute how he followed Kyouya around like a well trained puppy. He did have to explain to Kyouya that he couldn’t take Kusakabe kun home without his parents’ permission. Lee had a faint suspicion Kyouya might try and stash the kid under his bed with his other favourite things if he weren’t warned not to, and he wasn’t entirely sure little Tetsuya would argue with him. That could have got messy fairly quickly, so best to nip the idea in the bud.

Honestly Lee was a little surprised at the friends Kyouya had chosen. Kusakabe at least made some sense, with his unwavering devotion and long list of useful support skills. Sasagawa Ryouhei on the
other hand… Well Lee liked him, a lot. He just hadn’t expected Kyouya to like him. The kid was most youthfully enthusiastic, about pretty much everything, but training especially. Kyouya had always been a very controlled and serious child, it didn’t seem like the most natural connection.

But then again, Sasagawa kun was strong, he’d more than held his own in that spar, and Kyouya always did approve of strength. And Sasagawa’s exuberance did provide a good counterbalance to Kyouya’s rigidity. Rather like Lee’s did actually. Lee suspected that honestly might be why he was Kyouya’s favourite cousin. And now he came to think about it there were more than a few similarities between himself and Kyouya’s new friend. They were both energetic, and youthful, and devoted to hard work. They were both probably a little louder than they should have been. Maybe Kyouya looked up to him more than he thought. Lee felt so happy he thought he might burst at the idea. The youthful bonds of family burned strong.

In any case Lee was very happy that his adorable cousin had such good friends in the academy. And so he hadn’t been concerned when he graduated to genin, and left his cousin alone in the academy. Or at least he hadn’t bee at first. Maybe he should have been, because over time Kyouya had started acting oddly. It wasn’t a fast thing, nothing that could be pinned down to a single incident, but Kyouya had been increasingly on edge, touchy, even more so than was normal for him. Lee would have suspected some sort of problems with his classmates but there didn’t seem to be anything out of the ordinary in their reactions to Kyouya. In fact it seemed more the other way around. Kyouya had started, not stalking, his cousin would never engage in such an unyouthful activity as stalking, but observing Sawada Tsunayoshi. Lee didn’t know why, there didn’t seem to be anything unusual about the kid at first glance, but clearly something about him had caught Kyouya’s attention. He just hoped it wasn’t the same disturbing flowering of youth that had Lee’s female classmates following his teammate Neiji around and trying to steal his underwear. His cousin was better than that.

…

Lee spent the invasion in the hospital, half believing he’d never fight again, and hating himself for being so useless. It had been… frustrating. It might well have been the worst day of his life, except that after the invasion his cousin had come by to visit, and changed everything. Kyouya had come by, settled in his own skin in a way that Lee had never seen him, not even when he was a scrappy little three year old, with Sawada Tsunayoshi standing at his back and blazing like starlight in a way that tugged at something Lee had only ever been half aware of in his own soul. That was when Lee had started to understand why Kyouya was so drawn to the boy.

But for all Sawada’s intensity it was Sasagawa who truly managed to help. Kyouya had brought him and for once he’d been all calm focus as he called up a fire that burned as yellow as sunlight in his hands and ran it over Lee’s skin and through his bones. Sasagawa had healed him while Kyouya guarded the door and Sawada kept a discreet eye on the window. When he was done Lee was still far from healed but the body awareness he’d been developing since he was five years old and determined to become a ninja told him that his wounds were no longer something time couldn’t heal. That he was no longer broken beyond repair. When Sawada asked him to keep quiet about what had been done to fix him it had been an easy thing to promise. He trusted his cousin, and his cousin trusted Sawada, and he owed all three of them a debt beyond words or faith. Lee might be loud but he knew how to keep a secret quiet, and he was smart enough to know the kind of dangers a secret like that could carry for a group of children who weren’t even genin yet, with all the vulnerability that implied.

A few months later when he found that same yellow fire Sasagawa had wielded dancing over his own fists, he knew exactly who to go to.
Yeah Lee is a Sun. His injuries after the Gaara incident have stressed him to the point that he's on the edge of going active which is why he is suddenly picking up on Tsuna's Sky attraction. It's a general sort of thing though he's not drawn to Tsuna as his Sky, just as a Sky that's close to someone he trusts.

They use Sun flames to fix Lee to the point that a long recovery time and some chakra healing will have him fully recovered. No-one notices because things have been very very hectic after the invasion so they assume Lee just wasn't as bad as they thought/has better regenerative capabilities than they thought. The flames are not out of the bag yet.

And yes Lee is the second of Naruto's future guardians to go flame active. They haven't spent much time together though so there isn't even a latent bond yet.
Remembrance, for him, always centred on Kyouko. She wasn’t the only thing that mattered, not when there was also Sawada, and little Lambo, and the other guardians to look out for. Not when there was Hana who made his stomach twist in ways that were confusing but not necessarily bad. Kyouko wasn’t the only thing that mattered, and she wasn’t more important than everything else that he cared for, but she was the first. Kyouko was always the first thing he loved, the first thing he protected, the first time he knew his purpose in the world. He didn’t really understand what was going on, but that much he knew hadn’t changed, would never change.

And so it was Kyouko’s tears that reminded him, of the old life he’d forgotten, of the mafia, and flames, and Sawada who was home and little brother, and Sky, to him. It was when he saw Kyouko seven years old, crying after a fight she’d had no business being caught up in, that memory slammed into him with all the force of a fist to the jaw.

The memories changed everything and nothing. Kyouko was still his precious little sister, even if she was his twin now. After all, younger was younger and he’d been protecting Kyouko for more than one lifetime. He still loved to train, and fight, and move, he still found book lessons confusing, but people more simple than they liked to believe. He was still extreme friends with Hibari.

But now he could remember, and he could see a difference between the people he knew from before, and the ones who were entirely new, and it mattered, in ways he couldn’t put into words. And more than that, he could see the people that belonged to Tsuna like he did, could see the people that would belong to Kyouko if she awakened her flames, the people that were starting to belong to Naruto in the class above. He could see the lines being drawn and it seemed unimportant, even to the people who should have known better, but of all the guardians Ryouhei was probably the one who understood people best and he knew that one day, those lines of loyalty were going to come up against the existing structures of the village, and the village was going to lose. He worried about what would happen next sometimes.

Still it was unextreme to dwell too much on things that were too far into the future, not when there were so many wonderful, and exciting things about this new life. There was his cousin Sakura, who had slid neatly into the same category as Kyouko before he’d even relearned how to speak, nevermind that she was actually a year older. Ryouhei was an extremely good big brother and he’d
always wanted more sisters.

If he hadn’t been Chromes cousin, Ryouhei might have had to do something about Uchiha Sasuke. No-one got to mess with his cousin’s innocence that way.

Then there was Hibari’s cousin Lee, who was extremely youthful, and always up for training, or sparring, or simple competition. Ryouhei liked Lee a lot, he was an extremely good influence on Hibari. He’d managed to break Hibari down far enough that he didn’t even argue when he was challenged to a spar. Lee claimed it was the effect of youth wearing down his cousin’s hip and cool attitude. It seemed like a pretty good explanation.

And the Ninja academy was good too, physically focused enough to play to Ryouhei’s strengths in a way that the education system in their past lives just hadn’t. Taijutsu wasn’t quite like boxing, but it was extremely fun in its own right, and he could practice with Lee which was always fun.

He probably wouldn’t be so happy about his new life if everything he loved hadn’t followed him into it. He remembered blood, and fighting, and losses that would have been far too much to bear, all of it mercifully blurred. If he’d had to build his new life alone he probably wouldn’t have been even close to ok.

But it was fine. Sawada was there, he was there, and he remembered, and he was wasting no time in drawing them all back together as they should be. It wasn’t quite the same as it was. The world was very different, more open in its violence, more blatant and he was extremely unsure whether that was a good or bad thing, half of them still didn’t remember, it hurt at first to spar with Hibari, who was so familiar and yet a stranger.

Kyouko was going active as well, he’d been mafia long enough to know the signs. She never had done it in their old lives and it would be a lie to say his protectiveness had nothing to do with it. His protectiveness and her own desire not to disrupt the fragile power balance of their family, because they’d all known she was a latent Sky. A power, and a target in her own right if she ever did draw on her flames, and so she hadn’t pushed for it. That hadn’t saved her in the end though, not if she was here with him, maybe she was right to be trying to activate her will. His way had failed, if she wanted to try something different he loved her enough to respect that. Besides, Hana was going active right alongside her, and if Hana backed up by Cloud flames couldn’t protect her it was probably because the world was ending.

Mukuro, and Gokudera-who-was-called-Nara-now, both said they should keep quiet about their flames and the past lives thing, and they were a lot smarter than him so he trusted to their judgement. He did wonder though just how long they thought they could hide it, when Lee, and Sakura, and a good dozen others in the class above were poised on the edge of activating their own flames. Still Sawada seemed to think it was a good idea to wait for a while and he trusted Sawada’s instincts so he kept his mouth shut, and did his best to keep an eye on their upperclassmen. If they did go active, he would be there to help handle the situation. He was after all a sun, helping with growth was instinct.

Chapter End Notes

It's pretty much only Chrome's sad face that is keeping Ryouhei from skipping the shovel talk and going straight to burying Sasuke alive for toying with his darling, sweet, innocent, cousin's heart.
(Sasuke considers it a bit unfair that he's being blamed for Sakura being a terrifying stalker. Chrome secretly thinks it's really funny.)

And yeah Kyouko is a Sky. She never went active in canon because she didn't want to a) complicate the political situation within Vongola any more than it was already, or b) make herself a walking target/focus of assassination plots. Plan security through irrelevance turned out to be a total bust in the worst possible way, so this go around she's trying something different. She's not as strong a sky as Tsuna or Xanxus, but she's at least on Dino's level. Hana is her cloud, Haru is her mist. Have fun guessing the rest.

I made her a sky partly for plot purposes, and partly because there is a major shortage of female skies which irritates me.

And yep Ryouhei is basically keeping tabs on all the baby flame users waiting to swoop in and be the awesome big brother they never knew they needed.
Attraction and harmony

Chapter Summary

Sakura doesn't want to be suspicious of her cousins, she really doesn't, but there's a little voice that sounds like Shikamaru at the back of her head that won't stop whispering.
PS I just realised I hadn't posted this, and had thus posted the next chapter out of order. So for anyone wondering where Sakura's chapter went, here it is.

Chapter Notes

In which Sakura spends too much time with Shikamaru for her mental health, and too much time with Sasuke and Naruto for her emotional health, and too much time with her own cousins for her peace of mind.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The trouble with being friends with Ino, Sakura thought, was that it meant spending far too much time in the company of Shikamaru. Not that there was anything wrong with Shikamaru, it was just that, the more time she spent with Shikamaru the more plausible his insane cult theory became.

Too much time with Shikamaru and his paranoia made it awkward spending time with her cousins after, because if there was a cult, and she wasn’t saying there was, then her cousins were almost certainly part of what Shikamaru called the inner circle. It was hard to hold a normal conversation when you couldn’t help but notice the odd codes her cousins talked in when they thought she wasn’t listening, or the fact that they appeared to be saving up to help Sawada Tsunayoshi buy a house, or possibly a castle, they didn’t seem to have decided. There were perfectly reasonable explanations for all of it she was sure, she was just seeing things that weren’t there. It was totally Shikamaru’s fault, and so by extension, Ino’s fault.

Her cousins were not cultists. That would be ridiculous. Ok so maybe Ryouhei was a little extreme, but that was just him being overprotective. It was a perfectly reasonable trait for an older brother to have. And maybe it was a little worrying, how easily Kyouko was able to make people do what she wanted, but that just meant she’d been paying attention in kunoichi lessons, nothing suspicious about that.

And it was a good thing that they had so many good friends. If Ryouhei hadn’t been friends with Uchiha Nagi, then he might have done something… unfortunate, to Sasuke kun, when she first started liking him, even Ino admitted that could have been very bad. Not that Sasuke kun would have lost. He was amazing, and top of their class, and cousin Ryouhei was a year younger and thus less experienced. But Sakura and Ino had both seen what Ryouhei could do with the proper motivation, and well… it was probably for the best that it had never come down to an actual fight, and Ryouhei had restrained himself to graphic threats, and intimidating glares. It had made Sasuke a bit twitchy for a while, but really, it could have been a lot worse. She’d seen what happened to that boy Masamaru who pestered Kyouko one too many times.
She didn’t want to be suspicious of her cousins. They made her feel safe, steady in a way that she could never quite manage away from them. Ryouhei was all the solid protection an older brother could be, the person who would threaten potential boyfriends, and bandage up cuts, and always have something loud, and honest, and kind to say when she was feeling down. Kyouko was peace, was a presence that demanded nothing, and soothed the ragged edges of Sakura’s soul where her temper wore away at her inhibitions. She didn’t want them to be up to something bad.

And then she was assigned to team seven, and everything got so much harder. She should have been happy, she was on the same team as Sasuke-kun after all. But there was something about Sasuke that scraped her heart raw, even as he drew her in, shards of broken glass all sparkly and hypnotic and sharp enough to cut, and there was something about Naruto that tugged at her soul, tried to pull her in even as he infuriated her, and sometimes she felt so utterly exhausted, caught between the two of them, pulled one way and then the other, and all the while the two of them bickering, and fighting and talking through her like she wasn’t there.

It was a relief, to go home, to spend time with her cousins. To bask in Kyouko’s presence, which was as compelling as Sasuke’s and Naruto’s, but didn’t pull at her the way theirs did, didn’t demand. Didn’t want something from her that she had no words or understanding for. It was easy being with Kyouko, who didn’t want her the way Naruto did, the way Sasuke did but wouldn’t admit to, the way a part of her wanted them back, and sometimes she just needed time to get away, from her teammates, and their bullshit, and their teacher who didn’t notice how being caught between them was wearing at her.

The trouble was spending time with her cousins meant spending time with her friends, and the more time she spent with them the louder the little Shikamaru voice at the back of her head grew. It was the very presence she found so soothing, Sakura suspected, that had people following her cousin, and her cousin’s friend Tsuna like puppies. Because Tsuna had it too, even stronger than Kyouko, and a part of Sakura understood the urge to follow it.

Was it something they were doing on purpose. Shikamaru’s voice whispered at the back of her mind. Were they deliberately subverting people with some kind of insidious genjutsu induced sense of belonging. What kind of power were they trying to gather, what would they do with that power when they had it. She didn’t like that voice. She didn’t like the questions it asked. But she couldn’t quite ignore it either, not when her cousin’s classmates acted so oddly.

But then again, it wasn’t just Tsuna and Kyouko who were doing it. She recognised that feeling, she’d felt that same pull coming off both Sasuke and Naruto, so it probably wasn’t entirely intentional. Neither of those two had the subtlety to be involved in something so low key.

Shikamaru hadn’t noticed Naruto, and Sasuke actually. Sakura was pretty sure. Maybe it was because he was thinking too much in his head, tracking behaviour patterns so closely that he missed the feeling that had to be influencing those behaviour patterns. Well if he didn’t know Sakura wasn’t going to tell him. Paranoid conspiracy theorist didn’t need the encouragement, and she was sure Ino would agree with her on the subject.

Chapter End Notes

So Sakura is at this point an unattached latent storm, on a team with two latent skies, one
of which is badly broken and the other which she is convinced she's not allowed to want (as a result of the whole everyone hates Naruto thing), as a result she's being tugged at from both directions as they both instinctively try to draw her in and its more than a little stressful. Especially since none of them have any idea what's going on. Kyouko is soothing because she has a sky's harmony factor, but because she already has her own storm she's not actively trying to pull Sakura in.
Hearth and home

Chapter Summary

Five years old is in many ways the most important age Lambo has ever been.

Chapter Notes

In which Lambo is thoroughly spoiled by his new family and loves every minute of it, but he still wants his old family back.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Five years old was an important age for Lambo. Five years old was when he left home for the first time, escaped from a family that never quite had enough attention for yet another overly energetic child.

Five years old was when he found his sky, shockingly, unthinkably young, but he’d always been strong for his age and Tsuna-nii had needed him, and… when it came down to it, he’d needed Tsuna-nii. Had needed somewhere, someone to call home, had needed that bond, even if most mafia brats weren’t even introduced to potential skies until they were in double digits.

Five years old was when he met Ipin. Who was playmate, and childhood friend, and common sense to his recklessness. Ipin who he might have loved, but he’d still been a teenager when he died, and he never was quick to understand his own emotions.

Now, second time around and five years old was still such an important age. Five years old was when he remembered. A jolt of lightning from a stray Raiton jutsu (Cousin Chouichi had been in so much trouble for that) and he’d woken in the hospital surrounded by the worried faces of his new family the Akimichi, and the knowledge that there was another family he needed to find.

Not that there was anything wrong with his new family. His new family were amazing. Especially when compared to the Bovino’s good natured disinterest. The Akimichi doted on him. They always had time to play with him, to explain things to him, and they always always had a treat, or sweet to spare for him. They piled his plate high with food at breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and always made sure he had snacks to take with him when he went out to play. Lambo was in heaven.

It took an embarrassingly long time for him to realise they thought he was dying. Or at least very ill. He’d actually panicked for about a week after he figured that out, worried that they knew something he didn’t. Then he realised they were worried mainly because he wasn’t putting on weight, no matter how much they fed him. It certainly explained the many, many hospital visits, and the way they were always so eager to feed him. The med nins had repeatedly assured them they couldn’t find anything physically wrong, but most of the Akimichi were still pretty convinced he had some kind of life threatening metabolic disorder. He’d calmed down once he’d figured that out. He was pretty sure the reason he wasn’t putting on weight was a combination between the fact that flame actives, particularly young flame actives just burnt more energy than their civilian counterparts, and his utter inability to stay still for five minutes at a time (In his past life Ahoudera had muttered darkly about
ADHD on days he’d been particularly loud). So he wasn’t actually dying, he just wasn’t likely to put on the kind of weight his clan was known for.

As a result he was unlikely to ever be able to use his clan jutsus, but that wasn’t so bad. He was already pretty awesome, and there was after all only so much awesome the world could handle, being able to use his clan jutsus would be overkill. Not that there was anything wrong with overkill, but usually that was what Hibari was for, well Hibari and Tsuna on an HDM rampage.

Anyway his new family were amazing, but they were also a little… overprotective. It had taken some pretty epic temper tantrums to get them to let him enrol his frail and sickly self in ninja academy. It wasn’t like he could just explain to them that his family from another life would probably be enrolled there too and he needed to find them. It was a little frustrating being treated like he was helpless and needed to be protected, but it was also comforting. Like the first time he’d been five, with Tsuna-nii and everyone doing their best to shield him from the worst of the fighting, and Mama Sawada looking after them all. He knew he was strong, but it was nice knowing there were people who wanted to protect and look after him anyway.

It was also, he admitted, quite nice to be able to get away with acting his apparent age. Things that an adult or teenager would get dirty looks for, got indulgent smiles when you were small and cuddly, when you demanded sweets adults laughed, told you to say please, and then gave them to you, when you were upset you could throw a really truly satisfying temper tantrum and feel better an hour later. He liked being five, and if acting it helped to prevent people getting suspicious… well that was a bonus.

Anyway ninja academy, and he’d been right, his family were there waiting for them. Ok so not all of them remembered yet, but Tsuna-nii remembered, and Lambo knew without asking that the others would follow. They always followed where Tsuna led.

Tsuna had folded him back into his sky as easily as breathing, and it had been strange, being nearly the same age as his Sky, he was still the youngest but now it was by months not years. Tsuna-nii said it was because they all died at the same time, and so their reincarnation cycles started at roughly the same time. It made as much sense as anything ever did. The important thing was that he was home, green flames intertwined with orange and he loved the Akimichi, really he did, but they couldn’t compare to this.

It didn’t take him long to track down Ipin. She didn’t remember, but that was ok, she was still herself, and he still knew how to get under her skin. It took a day for them to be best friends again, and another piece of Lambo’s life settled into place just as it should be. Yes five years old was always an important age for Lambo.

Chapter End Notes

Lambo remembers at about age five. The Akimichi have been holding him back from joining the academy because they think he's sickly and frail (everyone else is of the opinion he's a hyperactive monster), so he doesn't join the academy until after he remembers, about halfway through first year. So he remembers after Tsuna, Mukuro, and Hayato, but before Takeshi and Ryouhei. Ipin will remember, but not yet. I've decided Lambo quite likes being looked after, he's the kind of person who likes trips to the hospital because everyone gives him cards and sweets and attention. Not
everyone is a self denying stoic, and Lambo learned early on that people looking after him was a good thing.
Cousin Lambo might be sickly, and fragile, but that doesn’t mean he isn’t strong in his own right.

Chouji’s first clear memory of his cousin Lambo was of a tiny little scrap of a toddler, with a personality ten times too big for his body. He was only a year younger than Chouji, but he was barely half his size, and the adults talked in hushed whispers about him when they thought the children weren’t listening. They’d both been young then, Chouji three, and Lambo only just turned two, and Chouji had been captivated by idea that such a tiny human being could really be his cousin. He had adored Lambo.

As he grew older Chouji began to understand that cousin Lambo was sick, was fragile. That the very smallness that had so fascinated three year old Chouji was a sign of something wrong, and no-one could work out what it was. The adults always warned him, to look out for his cousin Lambo, to make sure he ate, and wrapped up warm, and didn’t get hurt, that he had to be careful when he played with him, because he didn’t have the size, and strength, and resilience that was an Akimichi’s birthright. And it hurt to know that because Lambo was so bright, so alive, so full of energy, and imagination, and it hurt to know that he would never be able to learn their clan jutsus, never grow up big and strong like an Akimichi should, might not even grow up at all, some whispered sadly. It hurt to think a life so bright might be cut short.

The clan as a whole didn’t expect that Lambo would ever become a ninja, too sickly, too fragile. They’d thought he’d take up a safe civilian role in the village, a chef maybe, or a resteraunt manager, something his body could handle, that would keep him close and safe, where his condition could be monitored. Chouji could have told them differently, if they’d ever thought to ask him. Lambo never had much of a concept of his own limitations and he wanted to be a ninja. And what Lambo wanted, Lambo eventually got.

Because Lambo might be small, and skinny, and frail, but even as a scrappy little toddler he’d had a will that could shatter steel, the kind of determination that burned and couldn’t be denied. Lambo was a fighter, and there was no way he would ever have settled for a civilian life, burning bundle of energy, and excitement, and constant motion that he was. Civilian work would have driven him man with boredom within a day.

The temper tantrum he’d thrown to be allowed to attend the academy had been truely spectacular. Windows were shattered, walls were destroyed, and some cousins insited they’d seen an eerie green glow appear around him at one point. For once it had been Chouji taking refuge at Shikamaru’s clan
compound while he waited for the chaos to die down. And it did die down eventually. Once he’d got
his own way. It was probably bad discipline, but the clan weren’t used to saying no to Lambo, and
so when he dug his heels in and demanded to go to ninja school like his cousins did, they had,
against their better judgement, agreed. And against all expectations he’d flourished, that tenacity, and
devotion, and boundless energy suiting the academy lessons well. The academy had been good for
Lambo, he had friends, and was learning fast, and while he was still small, he was proving that he
was tougher than he looked, and Chouji wondered if the clan had been doing Lambo something of a
disservice, treating him like glass when clearly all he wanted to do was be like all the other kids. He
was doing well at the academy, well enough that he was unlikely to just drop out the way Chouji had
suspected the clan’s adults had half expected him to, and Chouji couldn’t help but think of that as a
good thing.

The clan worried about that he knew, but Chouji was glad. So what if Lambo was sick, there were
other sick ninja, like that swordsman that coughed all the time, or Yamanaka Inori who had epilepsy.
Just because Lambo was sick, and couldn’t learn clan jutsus didn’t mean he shouldn’t live the life he
wanted, and so when the clan elders muttered about pulling him out of the academy, Chouji spoke
on his behalf. He liked to think it made a difference. In any case Lambo stayed in the academy, and
seeming, him wild and boisterous with his friends, it was hard to even remember he was ill.

The first time Lambo brought little Ipin home, half the adults in the clan nearly went catatonic at the
cuteness. She called him broccoli monster. Even Chouji could admit that was pretty cute and she
was only a year younger than him. Young love was so adorable. Apparently she was a budding
taijutsu expert, and judging by the way she managed to throw cousin Chokichi who was four years
older and about twice her weight, she was pretty good at it. Judging by his expression, cousin Lambo
was very impressed by that. Chouji had suspicions that his mother was already planning the
wedding.

Of course Ipin wasn’t the only friend that Lambo brought home from the academy. She was his best
friend, but there were plenty of others. There was Nara Hayato who spent most of his time acting as
though he wanted to strangle Lambo, but kept coming by to help him practice his aim, there was
Sasagawa Ryouhei, who was as loud as Lambo himself, and just as enthusiastic, there were a good
dozen others of varying degrees of closeness. And of course there was Sawada Tsunayoshi.

Sawada Tsunayoshi, who Lambo called Tsuna nii, who was the first person Lambo ran to when he
was upset, who had his whole class hanging on his every word and yet always made time for
Lambo, who Lambo quite clearly adored, and looked up to, and listened to in a way he did for no-
one else. Chouji knew that Shikamaru had certain… suspicions about Sawada Tsunayoshi, and
Chouji could see where they were coming from, really he could. There was certainly something
odd about Sawada. But no-one who was that good to Lambo, who had that much time and care for a
sickly child with a personality ten times too big for his own body, could really earn Chouji’s
suspicion. There were enough cruel people in the world to be suspicious of, without adding people
who had only ever tried to help. So Chouji did his best to distract and defuse Shikamaru when the
paranoia started to overcome his laziness, it was the least he could do for someone who had been
such a good friend to his cousin.

Chapter End Notes

Yeah Lambo's not actually fragile at all. He is in fact virtually indestructible thanks to
lightning flames. Everyone in the entire village is aware of this along with the fact that
Lambo is an uncontrollable hellbrat. Everyone that is, except the Akimichi. Admittedly
he tends to be quite sweet and well behaved towards them on account of the fact they spoil him rotten.

Chouji at least recognises that Lambo is a bit tougher than he looks and that he loves to be active, and therefore supports Lambo's ninja ambitions.
Creativity and rationality

Chapter Summary

Haru has watched her Sky die once. She's not going to let it happen again without a fight.

Chapter Notes

In which Haru is an Aburame, Kyouko is going flame active and taking her elements with her, and an intelligent Mist with access to a hive of chakra enhanced insects is a legitimately terrifying concept. Also Shamal is an Aburame.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The last clear thing Haru remembered before dying was the burning orange resolve in Kyouko’s eyes the sudden settling, the feeling of absolute rightness even as everything fell apart around them. Of course Kyouko was her Sky, she realised, it could never really have been anyone else, and the knowledge was cold comfort in the face of the knowledge that they were all going to die.

They had held back, and held back, and refused to go active, for so many reasons, some of them good some of them bad, but none of them good enough. Not when just a little more strength might have been enough to save them all. They had fought, she knew they had fought even if the memories were blurred, and far too painful to dwell on, but they’d held themselves back for too long and their strength hadn’t been enough.

She hadn’t expected to wake up. Maybe she should have. Clearly her imagination had been lacking. She wouldn’t make that mistake again. She was after all a Mist, and Mists lived on their own creativity. She had woken up to a whole new life, and a whole new world, and a whole new family, and if she hadn’t had six years of memories as Aburame Haru, to anchor herself to her new reality she didn’t know how she would have managed. She still didn’t know how Tsuna handled it, he said he’d remembered only two years in. He must have been so alone.

She hadn’t been sure quite how to handle the wild, twisted tangle, of feelings, and memory, and thought, that her past life had gifted her. So much grief, so much love. But if there was one thing both lives had taught her well, it was that logic, rationality, thought, could carry her through when her feelings were too chaotic to understand. And logic and rationality told her that everyone she loved had been reincarnated just as she was, and so there was no need to grieve. They had a second chance, and so there was no useful purpose served in dwelling on past mistakes. She would just have to do better, this time.

Kyouko, felt the same. Of course she did, she was Haru’s Sky, and that implied a certain level of compatibility. Kyouko said that this time there would be no holding back, this time they would go flame active, and there was orange fire in her eyes as she said it. Haru’s own Mist rose to meet Kyouko’s Sky, and for the second time Haru felt the steadying comfort of harmony. After that she spent every free moment clinging to Kyouko’s side just basking in the knowledge that she finally
belonged. That she had nothing to prove, and no need to fear she wasn’t really wanted.

Her cousins thought she was illogical. They didn’t understand why she was so attached to someone she barely knew before the day she recovered her memories at the light touch of Kyouko’s flames. That was fine, they just weren’t in possession of all the facts. Over attachment was a perfectly normal reaction for a newly bonded element to a Sky. For a fairly extreme example she just had to point to Gokudera kun, by comparison she was being positively low key.

Of course she couldn’t tell them that. Tsuna said they should keep their flame usage quiet for the time being, and Tsuna was the boss. Besides, his judgement was usually sound, and she had to admit, it made sense to hold back until they were more sure of their own situation. After all, this was a whole new world and they were still learning the rules. So her cousins thought she was a little silly for an Aburame. That was fine, they just didn’t know she’d found her place in the world. If they could feel the way her kikaichu buzzed when bathed in Kyouko’s Sky, they would understand.

Her cousins thought she was silly, but Kyouko believed in her. Said she knew Haru was smart. And Haru wanted to prove her right. She was, she suspected, better at combining flames with jutsus to create new, and useful effect than any of the rest of their generation. She’d managed to adapt Chrome’s old trick with her organs, to nearly double the amount of Kikaichu she could support, and she’d worked out an interesting mist application, that forcibly evolved them in all sorts of interesting directions. The day she’d worked out she could use her insects to anchor illusions, even Gokudera (who was Nara now, she had to remember), had admitted he was impressed.

She was, she suspected, even better with the insects than Shamal, (who was her distant uncle now, and hadn’t that been a faintly disturbing development). Shamal had after all, in the end mostly focused on adapting his insects for medical applications. Which he was good at, but he had ignored so many possibilities. She’d developed an insect that could inject a target with a shot of mist flames, which would then lurk in their bloodstream for years, waiting to be activated by a genjutsu she cast. She’d taught Mukuro that one in exchange for his tips on making her illusions more solid. She suspected he might have used it on Danzo.

She couldn’t tell if Tsuna was impressed or alarmed by her, and Kyouko’s newfound display of competency in the art of really messing people up, but that was pretty much par for the course with Tsuna. He generally wasn’t sure whether to be impressed or alarmed by pretty much anything that anyone he knew did, including himself. Haru thought it was cute, and more than a little amusing. But Tsuna’s reactions, while entertaining, really weren’t the point. The point was that she had lost her Sky once before, died within moments of harmonising, and she was enough of an Aburame to frown on the illogicality of failing to learn from her mistakes. This time, she, and Kyouko, and Hana, and anyone else Kyouko saw fit to bring under the shelter of her Sky, would be strong enough for anything.

Chapter End Notes

Wow, Haru was surprisingly hard to write. The Aburame were even harder to write. I did my best.
Aburame Shamal was not planned, but the logic of it was too good to pass up. I may end up mirroring his POV to Jiraiya, because perverts should stick together.
Haru remembered when Kyouko’s Sky attraction started pulling at her.
Concern and suspicion

Chapter Summary

Shino thinks his cousin might be a bit unstable. Then he starts talking to Shikamaru

Chapter Notes

In which Shino and Shikamaru bond over Shikamaru's conspiracy board.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shino was half convinced his cousin Haru was crazy. He just didn’t understand her, her logic at right angles to the world as he understood it. He couldn’t predict her, couldn’t understand why she did things, and things that he didn’t understand had always bothered him.

It wasn’t that there was no logic to her actions. There was definitely some kind of rational thought process at work, warped and twisted though it was. She was like all of his family in that at least, but where usually he could unravel the reasoning his kin were using, with Haru, understanding simply eluded him. He couldn’t predict her.

There were the costumes, the performances, the strange friends that could show up at any hour of the day or night. She seemed at once older and younger than she was, with the way she’d play tea party with their youngest cousins far beyond the age where most girls would have deemed it beneath them, and the hours she spent doing esoteric research on her kikkaichu with creepy uncle Shamal.

She was his cousin, and yet the calm stoicism common to his clan was almost entirely absent in her. Her moods were mercurial, wild, she felt everything so strongly and expressed it without reserve. Joy, and anger, and frustration, and love. Not that his clansmen were unfeeling, they were not, Shino was not, but to share his heart so freely clear for the world to see, the very idea off it was strange to him, uncomfortable, inappropriate, overwhelming. She put him off balance, and it was a terrible thing to resent your own relatives, but sometimes when it came to Haru, he couldn’t help himself.

Because for all her obvious instability Haru had friends, was an inseparable part of the close knit group that was her academy class, she had Kyouko, and Hana, and Tsuna, and a good dozen others. She was happy. While Shino, Shino sometimes felt invisible, adrift in the fractured social landscape of his classmates, and he didn’t know quite how to make himself a part of it. He was lonely, and she was not, and he didn’t know how to fix it.

But then, maybe that was as much to do with the differing social structures of their year groups as it was to do with their differing personalities. Because Shino’s class just didn’t have the cohesiveness that Haru’s class had. They were fractured into a dozen smaller friendship groups and he was far from the only one left on the outside, while Haru’s class was united. Yes there were different friendship groups within it but they were all part of one whole, centred around Sawada Tsunayoshi.

It was a year after Haru started at the academy that Nara Shikamaru told him his suspicions about Sawada and his class. Shino listened. When a Nara offered a warning, smart people paid attention,
and Shikamaru was a Nara right down to his bones. When he realised Shino wasn’t dismissing him out of hand Shikamaru had taken him back to his house to show him the evidence he’d gathered, and what he’d put together was… alarming. Why, because it indicated a level of influence that no-one should have been able to gain in a ninja village without ringing all sorts of alarm bells and yet the only people who seemed to have noticed were Shikamaru, and Shino himself. Shino was worried, and yet somehow, he also felt a little excited, thrilled at the thought of protecting the village in secret with a new friend who had trusted him with his findings.

According to Shikamaru’s records it seemed to have started on Sawada’s first day of the academy, when he met Shikamaru’s cousin Hayato, and it only escalated from there. The whole class was under Sawada’s thumb by this point, as well as plenty of others up to and including adult jounin. The whole class was under his thumb, but not all to the same extent. Shikamaru had profiles on all of what he called the “inner circle”, Shino wished he could say he was surprised that Haru’s name was on the list. On the one hand she was family, and he should trust in her, on the other hand, he knew she was unstable and cults liked to take advantage of unstable people. He wasn’t surprised, but he was worried. He might not understand Haru but she was family, and his responsibility, he didn’t want to see her involved in that kind of trouble.

At least she wasn’t one of Sawada’s core enforcers the way Shikamaru’s cousin seemed to be. According to the colour coded charts Shikamaru had shown him she was part of a trusted, but semi-independent group within a group led by the civilian born girl Sasagawa Kyouko, who was apparently the distant relative of their classmate Haruno Sakura. She was in deep, but not as deep as Shikamaru’s own cousin, who appeared to be one of Sawada’s closest confidants.

The whole situation was alarming really and Shino still wasn’t sure why none of the adults had noticed all this. That is until Shikamaru turned the page over to a particular profile.

Rokudo Mukuro, genjutsu expert. And now that Shikamaru was pointing it out to him, Shino realised that he had no idea where Rokudo came from, or where he lived, or even when his birthday was. Shino felt an icy chill down his back as he realised how thoroughly not only he, but dozens of competent adult ninja had been manipulated.

And it really was only him and Shikamaru who realised it. Shikamaru had tried to draw their other classmates attention to it, but none of them had taken him seriously. Some had humoured him, but none appreciated the full gravity of the situation, not even Yamanaka Ino, whose family were famous for their ability to read people. It was terrifying. He found himself spending more and more time with Shikamaru, trying to document the spread of Sawada’s influence.

He wasn’t sure it served much of a practical purpose, but he felt like he ought to be doing something. And if a part of him felt a little flutter of happiness at the chance to spend time and do something with a friend, well it was a good thing. After all team bonds were valued in Konoha.

Chapter End Notes

Shino is secretly having a lot of fun playing conspiracy nut with Shikamaru. They may or may not be encouraging each other's paranoia.

And they both find Mukuro very disturbing, as they probably should.

And yes Shikamaru totally has a conspiracy board in his bedroom.
Chaos and familiarity

Chapter Summary

Reborn has plans. The world trembles.

Chapter Notes

In which the arcobaleno fit right in to their new world. And then they realise they weren't the only ones reincarnated. They see a chance to wreak havoc and they run with it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It really hadn’t been hard to pick up where he left off. Being a ninja was a lot like being in the mafia, and Reborn had been very, very good at being in the mafia. It helped that his fellow arcobaleno had all been reincarnated with him, and they’d been able to rise through the ranks together, terrifying innocent bystanders as they went. He still remembered the glorious screams of horror from Research and Development when Orochimaru defected and his former subordinates realised that Verde was now in charge. Orochimaru had at least been predictable, one drunk scientist had sobbed in Reborn's hearing. It had been almost as entertaining as the day Lal Mirch had taken over Anbu training muttering about incompetence, and poor standards.

The only real difficulty had been adjusting to the lack of guns in this reality. The others hadn’t cared so much but Reborn liked guns. It was a minor setback, but he had a strong wind affinity and it hadn’t taken long to figure out how to fire a bolt of high velocity, highly compressed air for basically the same effect, with less noise, so in the end, he supposed it all worked out for the best. He’d made a name for himself, the bingo book entries all called him Chaos Reborn, and he was generally considered one of the most terrifying jounin in the village. It was very satisfying.

So there had been a few years of taking the time to enjoy this new world, which was like the mafia, but without having to bother hiding the mess from civilians. And then he’d run into a small and clumsy blonde genin named Sarutobi Dino, and he’d realised it wasn’t just the arcobaleno that had been reincarnated. Reborn had found himself smiling in anticipation. If everyone was being reincarnated, and after spotting Dino’s teammates, one with Bianchi’s pink hair, and the other with Squalo’s silver, Reborn was pretty sure they were, that meant an opportunity. A chance to wreak havoc the likes of which the ninja world could not even begin to comprehend.

Some investigation revealed that the tenth generation were all in the same academy class, and had yet to graduate, and that, had given Reborn ideas. It had been easy enough to sign himself and his fellow arcobaleno up as jounin sensei’s. Somewhat harder to manipulate the team compositions. After all, there were generations of tradition and protocol in play. Still, desk nin were briable. Even if it did take a packet of Reborn’s personal stash of extra strength Kumo coffee beans. It was a sacrifice, but it was well worth it. It wasn’t like he could let anyone else tort… teach his favourite student after all. Besides, Fon had a mission to Kumo in a couple of weeks and Fon owed him a favour, he could resupply. It wasn’t just about getting his favourite vict… student back of course. If it had just been
that he wouldn’t have bothered sacrificing his coffee, he’d just have intimidated the desk nin until he assigned him Tsuna’s team.

No, the coffee was in exchange for the desk nin in question going above and beyond to reorganise all of the team compositions for that year. He and his fellow arcobaleno had a bet going on, and there was no way, any of them were going to let the others show them up. And of course for the bet to be valid, they all had to start with the teams they’d agreed to, and for that to happen, bribes were needed. Everyone knew the desk nin were almost impossible to manipulate, off limits to any serious intimidation, and could only be bribed with a very limited list of items. Luce’s influence, she’d laid down the law when she took over the administration department and nobody crossed the terrifyingly polite head of admin if they could help it. And so Reborn’s coffee had paid the price, not that he was bitter about that at all.

At least the academy sensei hadn’t been any trouble. Skull knew better than to interfere with Reborn’s plans. Some lessons stuck for more than one lifetime after all. And in any case Reborn knew the lackey had some side bets going on the amount of chaos his former comrades in cursed misery would cause. He’d placed a considerable amount of money on Reborn’s student’s causing more havoc than Hatake and Maito’s students combined, despite the respective year and two year head starts they had on him. Reborn was almost insulted, that anyone could doubt him. Of course his students would cause more havoc than those amateurs. Hatake wasn’t even trying to traumatise his genin, he was just making do with the incidental damage to their psyches.

The most difficult thing had been convincing the desk nin to break up the Inoshikacho composition for that year. Honestly if the clans themselves hadn’t been a little nervous at the idea of putting Hana, Hayato, and Lambo on a team together, it might have taken more than just Reborn’s coffee stash. It had to be done though. Verde wanted his indestructible test pilot, and he wanted to watch Tsuna deal with Hayato’s tsundere tendencies again, and no-one wanted to see what would happen if they tried to separate the Sasagawa girl’s Cloud from her again. That girl was terrifying. Which made it only fitting that she was Lal’s problem now. But still, breaking generations of tradition didn’t come cheap and Reborn was feeling the caffeine deprivation. So was everyone around him. When Reborn suffered, other people suffered with him. He made sure of it.

Two whole weeks with only standard Konoha coffee, but it was all worth it when he arrived to meet his new team and heard a familiar high pitched screech. “Hieee, Reborn, you’re our sensei?” He honestly sounded surprised. Reborn was disappointed in him, had he learned nothing over years as his student.

“Dame Tsuna. Of course I’m your sensei. You still have a lot to learn. It takes more than dying to escape being taught by the world’s number one hitman.”

Chapter End Notes

The arcobaleno all remembered when they first saw each other at the academy, because seeing each other as children the first time was a pretty significant event. They are all about a year younger than Kakashi.
Reborn and Kakashi have a very low key rivalry. Gai and Fon have a very not low key rivalry. All four of them are trying very hard to one up each other, but Gai is the only one who will actually admit to it.

They’re all jounin except for Skull and Luce. Skull is the tenth gen’s academy sensei,
and Luce is in charge of the administration department and terrifies absolutely everybody.
Verde is in charge of R&D, and he's even more terrifying in a lot of ways than Orochimaru. Orochimaru never filled the village with sentient robot tuna because of a lab accident.
Genin teams are as follows
Tsuna, Hayato, Takeshi – Reborn
Kyouko, Hana, Haru – Lal Mirch
Shouichi, Spanner, Lambo – Verde
Ryouhei, Hibari, Kusakabe – Colonello
Mukuro, Chrome, Fuuta – Mammon
Ken, Chikusa, Ipin – Fon

btw Dino's jounin sensei was Romario, his teammates were Squalo and Bianchi, and he's not a direct descendent of Sarutobi. Just a distant relative, and a member of the same clan.
Theory and practice

Chapter Summary

Reborn has a genin team. Kakashi has a horrible feeling this might somehow end up with him having to do actual work.

Chapter Notes

In which Kakashi muses over the impending disaster that is Reborn, Gai, Fon, and himself, all having genin teams at the same time.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

There was something a little unnerving, and yet morbidly amusing, about Reborn getting a genin team. Kakashi remembered that horrifying incident when Reborn had volunteered to offer student mentoring to the younger classes back at the academy. He was just glad he’d already graduated and therefore couldn’t be held responsible for the whole study group ending up in the middle of the forest of death. He hadn’t been there, but Genma had gleefully filled him in on the way that Reborn had got all the kids swallowed whole by a giant leech. Deliberately. So they’d learn how to activate explosive tags while being digested.

It had been pretty funny from a distance actually, and by that point Kakashi was already a Chunin, and therefore at a very comfortable distance indeed, so he was able to enjoy the mayhem without being held responsible for any of it. The idea of having Reborn as his co-instructor was a little less appealing. For one thing whatever else anyone could say about him, Reborn did work hard, especially at teaching, and he got results, quickly. If Reborn got too much attention people might start pressuring Kakashi to work hard, and get quick results. He shuddered in horror at the thought. Kakashi was very much a fan of student led learning, and self-study. He felt it delivered a more independent, and self-motivated ninja, as well as being far less work for him. Besides the looks on their little faces when they saw him relaxing with a good book while they tried to subdue Tora the demon cat again was absolutely glorious.

Reborn was more a fan of the training from hell approach, tempered with a truly sadistic sense of humour. Sort of like an unholy cross between Gai and Anko. Reborn actually made lesson plans, and made sure they were followed. He organised events to test his students skills, he put effort into motivating them. Admittedly he did it all with a kind of vicious manipulation that even Kakashi could admit was amusing but still, that was a lot of effort to go to to torment kids that could probably manage to traumatise themselves given a few basic tasks and enough rope to hang themselves with.

And of course it wasn’t just Reborn. Whatever Reborn did he always somehow managed to drag other people into it, particularly his yeamates. Kakashi didn’t know how every jounin of that year group had managed to score a genin team, and not only that but the specific genin team they wanted, he wasn’t sure he even wanted to know. All he knew was that they’d done it, which meant thing were likely to get… exciting fairly quickly. Because of course, that meant that Fon also had a genin team, and Fon and Gai having genin teams at the same time was just a recipe for competition. Fon
might seem laid back, but he and Gai really had far too much in common. Kakashi still remembered the famous dumpling eating contest that had ended with a draw when both contestants had to get their stomachs pumped.

Kakashi had done a little recon on Reborn’s future team, just… for information purposes. It was a good team honestly. Certainly a lot better than his had been, for starters they all seemed to be friends already, and used to working together, no fangirls, no out of control rivalries, Kakashi was almost jealous. Although the way the mini swordsman and the Nara’s worst nightmare acted almost like bodyguards to the fluffy one was a little worrying. He’d have said there was some kind of bullying issue except for some unfathomable reason Sawada Tsunayoshi seemed to be the most popular kid in the class.

At any rate it was overall a good team, which made Kakashi even more suspicious that Reborn had done something to manipulate the assignments. Genin team assignments were one of the few opportunities the desk chuunin had to get revenge on the jounin for shoddily filled out paperwork, and they took full advantage of that. They were absolute masters of creating teams with nightmarish personality clashes, that were also an excellent match in terms of skillsets so the Jounin sensei couldn’t complain. Reborn had to have bribed someone to get a team that actually got on with each other. Kakashi just wished he’d thought of that.

The kids were of course all insane, Kakashi really expected nothing less from Reborn’s students. It wasn’t like Kakashi’s students were models for mental stability. Nor were Gai’s kids for that matter, now that he came to think of it, he couldn’t think of any reason a sane child would become Gai’s mini me. He hadn’t got as much data on Fon’s team, but he was sure they would be just as low key crazy as their mentor, Fon was like that. He seemed normal, right up until you realised he was actually just a softly spoken maniac. There was probably going to be chaos, the kids were all crazy and their teachers would probably only encourage those tendencies, himself included. Crazy kids were so much more entertaining than sane ones after all, and he had to get back at the Hokage somehow for making him babysit the brats. And it wasn’t like any of them was going to let the others outdo them when it came to creating violently unstable chibi monsters, they were all far too competitive for that.

Sometimes Kakashi did wonder if the Hokage was going senile, encouraging all four of them to take on genin teams at the same time. Did he not remember the notorious Tea country diplomat body guarding incident? The desk nin were still trying to make sense of those mission reports, trying to figure out what had been going on with the bandits, and the assassination plots, and the travelling circus, and the dancing bears. After that incident the Yondaime had put a note in all their files saying no more than two of them were to be put on the same mission at the same time, due to the risk of challenge escalation.

At some point, someone, probably Gai, was going to suggest a joint training session. Kakashi fully intended to be very very late for that meeting. He was sure the chaos would be wonderful to watch, from a distance. Maybe he should set up cameras in advance. Of course it might damage his plausible deniability, but he could make a fortune selling the recordings on the black market.

Chapter End Notes

For reference, this fic takes place a little bit before the chuunin exams, because I think they'd probably set provisional team compositions before the exams, and because a lot of stuff happens during the exams that would make this situation seem lower priority.
So Reborn doesn't actually have his team yet, but everyone knows he's been assigned one, and that it's one he actually wants. The world trembles.
Chapter Summary

Lal was the last arcobaleno to die, it really helped her sort out her priorities.

Chapter Notes

The anbu recruits whispered horror stories about Lal Mirch and her training from hell. Now she has taken a holiday from Anbu to teach a genin team. The world trembles.

The first time Lal saw his stupid smiling face again she punched him in the nose. It was very satisfying. Didn’t slow him down much of course. Nothing slowed that idiot down for long. Nothing except… well that was over now, tragedies of another life not worth dwelling on, and if she did pull his stupid grinning mouth into a kiss after she punched him, well, that was her decision wasn’t it. Colonello had died before they could resolve things in their previous lives, she was not going to let that happen again.

Their teacher had looked a bit surprised at the whole exchange though. After all it wasn’t every day that you saw five year olds resolving a lifetimes worth of romantic tension. It was just a shame the sexual tension had to wait for puberty.

She was happier than she’d ever admit to, to realise that all her fellow arcobaleno had been reincarnated with her. They were infuriating, and destructive, and violent, and life would be altogether too boring without them. That didn’t mean she didn’t start plotting revenge as soon as she spotted the others settling bets at her and Colonello’s wedding. Betting on someone’s relationship was one thing, everyone did it, she was willing to turn a blind eye, settling the bets at the actual wedding though was just tasteless. Maybe she should set Luce on the lot of them, Luce always did despise poor taste.

This new world was perfect for them, a gloriously entertaining second chance, she’d even found herself wondering if this was some sort of bizarre mafia specific heaven. There was something for all of them, war, and useless new recruits to amuse her and Colonello, research for Verde, very respectable pay scales for Viper, new and exciting ways to commit violence for Fon. Luce had taken over the whole administrative department, Skull had become a teacher of all things, and of course the sheer insanity of living in a world of magic ninja’s provided endless entertainment for Reborn.

She had of course joined Anbu. It had seemed like the thing to do. Colonello had followed her of course and it hadn’t taken long for them to take over training. Lal did so love driving new recruits until they threw up, and Colonello was an excellent co-instructor. All of Anbu feared her. Her training schemes were legend, whispered about in the Anbu locker room by traumatised students. Possibly she was why her fellow arcobaleno were so studiously avoiding Anbu, but she doubted the sage himself would ever get them to admit it. Lal’s reign of terror was well established and it was good.
She missed her guns a bit, it had to be said. If she had any major complaints to make about this new world she’d been born into, there was in the end nothing like a well-placed bullet to make a lagging trainee pick up the pace. But throwing a kunai at them had a similar effect if slightly less satisfying, and access to katon jutsu was a fair trade-off for the lack of decent firearms. Reborn had worked out how to make air bullets because he was just extra that way, but Lal was quite happy just setting things on fire. It worked for the Uchiha after all, and if Colonello had Verde secretly at work trying to make a sniper rifle for their anniversary, well she knew nothing and would be suitably surprised when he gave it to her.

…

It hadn’t been easy abandoning her cute Anbu puppies in order to teach a genin team, but bets had been made, and challenges issued and there was no way Lal would be the one to back down, not when that idiot Colonello had already agreed. Besides, those girls had the potential to be utterly terrifying, and helping them reach their potential could be so much fun.

*And* they were flame active, as they hadn’t been last time around, at least they hadn’t before her death, and judging by the raw newness of their flames they probably hadn’t before their own deaths. Lal loved tort-teaching flame actives, they could take so much more punishment than regular recruits. She could grind them right down into the dirt and they’d still get up and ask for more. She compared a few lesson plans with Reborn before the final academy graduation. Their sadistic cackles had been heard echoing down the street. Colonello said it was creepy, but he shut up when she threw a handful of fire at him. There was nothing creepy about plotting to torture genin, all the other jounin sensei did it. It was practically their job.

…

Lal looked at her new team. Sky, Cloud, Mist, a volatile combination, but no-one had even wanted to try separating Hana from Kyouko, and at that point it seemed a little cruel to exclude Haru, so all kunoichi team it was. It had the added advantage of ensuring the whole team was flame bonded, so instant teamwork, take that Hatake. The traditional setup was overrated anyway. Tradition would have had an Inoshikacho team made up of Hana, Hayato, and Lambo, even *Reborn* had baulked at releasing that on the world.

No this way was better, and the girls really were delightfully motivated. Kyoko was learning strategy, and Haru was learning disguise, and Hana was learning politics alongside the kind of extreme violence Clouds were notorious for. Lal, left them to deal with their own specialisation in favour of beating the basics into all of them. After all, whatever their specialties might be it was always good to know just enough of everything to fuck shit up. That was Lal’s specialty. Explosives, weapons, hand to hand, Flames, the manipulation of information, the girls soaked it all up like sponges, and then took the initiative to improve on their own. Lal grinned with vicious satisfaction. Her team was going to beat Colonello’s team into the ground, when it came time to settle the bets at the Chuunin exams.

Chapter End Notes

Not entirely happy with this one, but it helped move things along. It's my personal headcanon that Lal and Reborn bond over torturing their students. Next chapter is Ibiki.
Sanity and sense

Chapter Summary

Those Six have been given genin teams. Ibiki suspects that the village's collective sanity might be a writeoff.

Chapter Notes

In which Ibiki considers the challenge of trying to keep the village sane in the face of the arcobaleno being given genin teams and decides some battles aren't worth fighting.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Ibiki found out exactly who in the administrative department had been compromised, he was going to make them suffer in direct proportion to the amount of stress this latest development was going to cause him. And it would be a lot, Ibiki wasn’t stupid, he could see the writing on the wall. Someway, somehow, someone had decided it was a good idea to say yes when that class asked to become jounin sensei, and not only that, but to let them take on teams at the same time. Bribery had been involved he was sure, he didn’t know how, since Luce “The Teamaker” had rendered the entire admin structure virtually incorruptible, but there was no way this situation had come up without some kind of deal going down. No-one in their right mind would subject the village to this otherwise. Although, people often forgot that Luce was also a member of that class, maybe this went all the way to the top.

He cursed again the fact that the Nidaime in his infinite wisdom had decided to make T&I responsible for psych evals and counselling. No-one was quite sure what had been going through their might Hokage’s head that day, although there was a certain amount of speculation. Some said he was drunk, others theorised that the head of T&I had just been the slowest to disappear when he was handing out that job. Ibiki personally suspected Tobirama sama had been operating on the principle that if you knew how to break it you could probably figure out how to fix it and vice versa. Which was all very well in theory, but in practice meant that you had a bunch of enthusiastic sadists who were fairly unbalanced in their own right, in charge of making people deal with their issues and feel better about life. Honestly it worked pretty well considering, but it really hadn’t been one of Tobirama sama’s finest decision making moments. There may have been some slight personality conflict, a small case of the blind leading the blind, some unfortunate minor paperwork mixups when the patients were mistaken for the “patients”. Suffice it to say that trying to fix his traumatised comrades was not Ibiki’s favourite part of the job, and he foresaw a sharp and unpleasant spike in the number of patients over the next few years.

He’d thought it was bad when Maito Gai was assigned that genin team he wanted and promptly succeeded in creating a mini me complete with green jumpsuit, he’d thought he’d fallen to new lows when Hatake “I can’t deal with emotions” Kakashi was assigned the most emotionally unstable genin team Ibiki had seen in years, complete with reminders of his past to torment himself with. This though, he wondered if this was what rock bottom felt like. The thought of any of those six on their own with a team of impressionable genin to mould into their minions was horrifying enough, but all
of them at once… never mind the genin, the genin were probably a write off at this point, what would it do to any innocent bystanders.

It was bad enough dealing with Lal “The centipede demon” Mirch’s traumatised Anbu trainees. After all, people expected Anbu agents to be a little… off, and as long as she was busy tormenting baby Anbu she was contained away from the general populace. Giving that woman a genin team was tantamount to unleashing her on the village as a whole and the village was not ready. Add in the horrifying escalation that would result from those six trying to show each other up, and he wondered just how much of the village would be left standing. According to his sources there were bets involved.

Worse, the whole affair had given Anko ideas, she wanted a team of minions of her own and at the rate things were going he had a horrible sinking feeling she was going to get one. He’d spent the last several years trying to steer her away from the idea. It looked like his luck had run out. He foresaw genin training trips to the forest of death in the future, he foresaw kids coming out with giant tigers and man eating leeches as pets, he foresaw Anko giving the Talk, complete with diagrams. Maybe he should just consider the village’s collective sanity acceptable losses. After all, some of their best ninja seemed to function perfectly well without any, maybe the whole sanity thing was overrated.

Yes, maybe that was the answer. If you can’t beat them join them. As long as everyone was equally crazy, no-one should notice the difference. He ignored the little voice in his head that said it probably didn’t work like that. He was in charge of psych evals, if he said everything was fine, everything was fucking fine. Besides, if anyone had really cared about sanity they’d have stopped this from happening.

And it might be fun to raise his own team of tiny little sadists. Children had a talent for viciousness that most adults just seemed to have lost somewhere along the way. It would be interesting to see if he could encourage them to hone that instinct. If civilian horror films were anything to go by small smiling children in dark rooms were one of the scariest things there was. He grinned a little at the thought of introducing his hypothetical genin to some of his more stubborn cases. It wasn’t a nice grin.

It was just a shame really that he’d missed out on this graduating class, say what you like about those guys but they knew how to spot talent. There was something about that class, a level of co-ordination and purpose that most genin just lacked. It might have been fun teaching that little Yamanaka Hana how to best terrify enemy ninja into giving up all their secrets with just a meaningful glare. Oh well Lal Mirch had got there first, and he had absolute confidence in her ability to make those kids terrifying in any way they chose. He’d just have to keep an eye out for other promising students.

Chapter End Notes

Wow this chapter was hard to write. I’m not sure how ic Ibiki turned out, but who cares it works for the story. I think next chapter might be Skull POV before we move too far away from the kids’ academy days.
Progress and pragmatism

Chapter Summary

Losing Orochimaru really was an unfortunate necessity. It was for the good of the department. The fact that Verde got a promotion in the aftermath was just a bonus.

Chapter Notes

In which Verde gets the long knives out on Orochimaru before he can completely discredit science in Konoha.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sometimes, Verde thought, his enemies really did make things far too easy for him.

He hadn’t even needed to fabricate any evidence in the end, Orochimaru had dug his own grave, along with the graves of all those Konoha orphans. All Verde had to do was make sure the right pieces of evidence found the right people, at just the right moment.

Timing had always been a strong point of his.

It hadn’t been a casual decision. Verde was the furthest thing from sentimental there was, but there were few enough gifted scientists in this world and he wasn’t petty enough to damage the progress of knowledge for the sake of his own advancement. No, Verde had in fact, felt a certain amount of regret when he came to the conclusion that Orochimaru had to go. It was an unfortunate necessity, but a necessity nonetheless, and so Verde had done his part to accelerate the process.

It really was a shame, the man was brilliant, in that fractured, obsessive way that Verde knew all too well, and together they could have reshaped the laws of man and nature. But Verde was a pragmatist and Orochimaru had made himself a liability, allowed creativity and impulse to compromise the rigours of the scientific method, creativity had its place, but it had to be backed up by the hard slog of research and repetition to have any true scientific value.

He supposed it was a cautionary tale of sorts. Nothing good comes of experimenting on oneself unless one is very sure of the potential outcomes of any modifications, and Verde was more and more convinced that Orochimaru’s “self improvements” were affecting his ability to reason. He had, after all grown increasingly unstable as the modifications were added.

Orochimaru had allowed obsession to cloud his judgement, running experiment after experiment on the same subjects until it was impossible to say what results came from which tests, conducting experiments that, were he discovered would see him exiled or executed, and likely half the research department along with him for complicity. It made Verde coldly, viciously angry, that a fellow scientist, one who professed to value knowledge above all, could risk all their work, for the sake of his personal obsessions.

Did he not think, what would happen when his illegal experiments were discovered? How long
would it be before the village put their trust in scientists again, how would it affect their ability to recruit fresh talent, their freedom to act unscrutinised, their funding. It was careless, and unprofessional, and it was a threat to the work of every other scientist in Konoha.

So Verde had acted to limit the damage. One scientist going rogue could be balanced out by another being the one to stop him, and if it put him in prime position to take over research and development with Orochimaru gone, well, he’d never claimed to be completely altruistic.

Orochimaru knew it was him of course. No-one else within the department would have dared betray him, and no-one outside had the necessary access. But Verde had risen to second in rank in the department purely on merit, was every bit Orochimaru’s equal, he knew where all the bodies were buried, and he had never feared the snake Sannin.

That lack of fear alone would have been enough to make Orochimaru hate him, even without their academic differences, and their debates over the merits of biological studies, over technological advancements were the stuff of department legend. Verde believed biological research took too long to be effective, and was too unpredictable in its results, Orochimaru argued that technological devices had no loyalty, could just as easily be used by their enemies. Verde had responded snidely that with the ongoing missing nin issue adding a biological component didn’t exactly solve that issue. Things generally degenerated from there.

Really, Verde was the very first person Orochimaru would have expected to turn on him, and for that very reason he hadn’t seen it coming until it was too late. He’d known Verde disapproved of the direction he’d been taking the department in, and would probably be quite happy to take his job, and what was more he’d known Verde knew that he knew that. And so he’d expected Verde to be more cautious knowing that he was under suspicion, that Orochimaru was watching him. He’d expected him to be subtle.

If Verde had feared Orochimaru he might have been. But Verde was once arcobaleno, with all that meant, was still arcobaleno, even with the curse broken and that life gone. He had been cursed, and died, and rewritten time, and then died again in blood and battle and he’d never let any of it turn him aside from his dedication to progress, to the advancement of human knowledge. It would take more than the likes of Orochimaru to make him cautious.

So he’d walked into the Hokage’s office bold as brass and left certain files on the man’s desk, while he was delivering the budget reports. After all, he wasn’t the one trying to hide things, what need did he have to sneak. Orochimaru knew it was him, but he still hadn’t seen it coming until the men in the bone white masks came for him, found the secret basements where the children in cages lived, found the incinerator, found the charred bones. And then of course there had been no talking his way out, no way to retain his power in Konoha. He’d been thoroughly outplayed. He knew Verde was behind it, but Verde had outplayed him, to the point where there was nothing he could do about any of it but run. No doubt he would hold a grudge, and try and get back at Verde at some point, but at least for now, Verde had won, and in science, the here and now was really the only thing that could be counted on.

A week later and Verde, as the new head of research and development had announced a new direction for the department, away from the inefficient, biological modifications that had been so tainted by Orochimaru’s work, and towards more technological devices, that could be issued to any shinobi as needed. He smiled, it had been all too easy to gain the Hokage’s support for his changes, with everything Orochimaru had touched so discredited, and himself the loyal voice of principle.

It was a shame to lose Orochimaru’s mind, but for the greater good of the department, Verde would have been willing to make far greater sacrifices.
Chapter End Notes

Thanks to Verde's intervention Orochimaru gets caught a lot earlier than in canon, and more than just Tenzo makes it out of those labs alive.
Also, thanks to Verde's new direction for science in Konoha, lower ranked shinobi start being armed with various kinds of alarming weaponry, which makes everyone very wary of Konoha ninja.
Jounin after all, are considerably harder to mass produce than death rays.
(It takes a while for them to work up to death rays though since Verde is basically rebuilding the tech base from scratch. They're approaching that point by the sand/sound invasion.)
Orochimaru is most definitely holding a grudge against Verde. Verde really doesn't care.
Research and basic principles

Chapter Summary

Orochimaru should have arranged a lab accident for that green haired, backstabbing weasel while he had the chance.

Chapter Notes

In which Orochimaru plots revenge, and Verde is annoyingly hard to kill.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Orochimaru should have “lab accidented” that backstabbing, department stealing, green haired weasel while he had the chance. It wasn’t like he hadn’t considered it, the man’s plans for chakra enhanced mechanical weaponry were a disaster just waiting for an opportunity to happen. Just imagining what would happen if an enemy managed to scavenge some off a battlefield, and, sage forbid, duplicate them, it would be impossible to maintain control of distribution. Biological methods might be slower, and messier, but ultimately they were easier to control, no risk of incompetent chuunin and overenthusiastic genin accidentally leaving confidential weaponry on the battlefield if the weaponry was a part of their bodies after all. Orochimaru just didn’t understand how someone so obviously brilliant could be so very wrong. It had been infuriating. Nearly as infuriating as Verde’s constant refusal to acknowledge Orochimaru’s authority, which to be clear had been pretty bloody infuriating.

Yes Orochimaru really should have got rid of Verde a long time ago, it would have been easy, a quick substitution of some volatile chemicals, some judicious threatening of timid subordinates, and the whole thing could have been written off as an unfortunate accident. The weasel had been a thorn in his side since he first showed up in R&D with his insubordinate attitude, and his unsound ideas, and his irritating pest of a nin crocodile. Orochimaru swore that animal had it in for him, with the way it had kept eating his research projects, and oh so conveniently tripping him up when he was carrying dangerous substances, and giving him those looks that no reptile should have been capable of, and Orochimaru of all people would know.

He should have had Verde killed, discreetly, before it ever got to this point. But… it had just seemed so wasteful. The man had potential, if he could just be persuaded to the right way of thinking. There weren’t many scientists that could even begin to keep up with Orochimaru, and he’d been blinded by the novelty of having someone who was almost a challenge. Someone who could actually argue with him rather than just being demolished by his brilliance. Obviously he was wrong, but he was wrong in intelligent ways. It had been such a relief, to have someone understand the concepts he was working with without Orochimaru having to spoon feed it to them, even if it was because the two of them spent so much time shouting those concepts across the lab at each other, before retreating to run more tests, and mutter about progress and showing them all.

In the end, it wasn’t surprising that Verde had turned on him, his second had always had his own agenda and no loyalty to speak of. It was one of the things Orochimaru had liked most about him,
even as he found it infuriating. He just hadn’t been expecting it to happen so fast, it had taken less than a day for Verde to discredit him. He hadn’t been ready, and the backstabbing weasel had caught him off guard. Going to the Hokage with evidence of Orochimaru’s less… ethical experiments had been a low blow, especially when he knew for a fact that Verde had no more scruples than he did when it came to the pursuit of knowledge. He knew exactly what sort of experiments Verde had been running in the back shed, the whole department did, and anyone who said energy weapons were less messy than biological augmentation hadn’t seen what Verde did to those bunny rabbits. Verde had just been smart enough to clean up the evidence when he was done.

Orochimaru actually found himself grudgingly impressed by how effectively his rival had managed to convince the Sandaime that he was the model of an ethical scientist. He just wished he’d thought to keep some evidence of what Verde had done with those prisoners of war and the chakra eating ray gun. Then he could have beaten the traitor at his own game, because that mess had been enough to give even Orochimaru nightmares. But Orochimaru had been careless, he’d underestimated his subordinate, and now Verde was busy running the department into the ground, while Orochimaru had to rebuild everything from the ground up.

Maybe it was for the best though. If he started his own village there would be no need to pander to the scruples of men less far sighted than him, no-one looking over his shoulder asking if it was right to run a particular experiment on living human subjects. He wouldn’t have to beg, and manipulate to get the funding he needed either. Yes, being exiled had been a blessing in disguise really.

And with the free reign running his own village would grant him he’d be able to prove once and for all that biological enhancement of loyal ninja was a far more reliable way of increasing a village’s military strength. Verde would see just how mistaken he was, right before Orochimaru had him killed. Preferably in a slow and painful way. Just because being exiled might actually be useful to his plans, didn’t mean Orochimaru was going to forgive the weasel.

Admittedly his earlier assassination attempts had been less than successful. For someone who had allegedly never been a front line ninja, Verde was suspiciously good at handling himself. But then again, considering who his classmates were, maybe it had just been a basic survival strategy. And of course while he was clearly deeply misguided he was he was intelligent. Almost a match for Orochimaru in that respect, so maybe he should have predicted that it would take more than an ordinary murder attempt to finish the traitor off.

He’d started with the basics of course. Poison in the food had been caught by Verde’s insistence on checking everything he ate for just that purpose, with a handy portable poison detection kit he’d invented. Bombs had also proved useless in the face of the explosives detection seals he’d had a friend devise on his behalf. Orochimaru had then resorted to sending in a series of shady characters with sharp edged weapons, only for them to be dispatched in ever more ignominious ways by their target. Verde was a menace with a beaker full of lab chemicals and that handseal free shield jutsu the man had devised was just cheating. Orochimaru wasn’t even going to mention the idiots that had managed to get themselves eaten by Kaiman, that had just been natural selection and was his own fault for hiring incompetents. But he’d even made a personal attempt during the chunin exams, and Verde had managed to dispatch his augmented shadow clone without even breaking a sweat.

If things continued as they were, Orochimaru might just have to get… creative.

Chapter End Notes
Orochimaru canonically has a slight tendency to obsess. As a result, he will be making increasingly absurd assassination attempts on Verde. Think Wiley Coyote. Next up is Kyouko I think, for a more detailed examination of the Chunin exam incident.
Desire and responsibility

Chapter Summary

Kyouko is not going to be helpless ever again. She has too much to protect. And there are a pair of baby Skies that need to stop messing with her cousin.

Chapter Notes

In which Kyouko is the Kunoichi class teacher's favourite student ever. And Temari and Kankuro are not equipped to deal with Konoha's terrifying academy students.
(takes place in roughly the same timescale as Hibari's chapter)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

In retrospect, Kyouko could probably have handled certain things better. She doesn’t regret it, precisely, the decisions she made seemed like the right ones at the time, and there’s little point in agonising over might have beens.

Still, in those last moments, with her Haru looking at her desperate, and afraid, and glowing with newly activated flames it was too late to learn how to use, with little Lambo and Ipin gearing up to fight even though they’d been far too young to die, in those moments she’d sworn to herself, that given it all to do over again she would never allow herself to be caught so helpless.

And then, wonder of wonders, she had been given it all to do again. A second chance, and this time, she wouldn’t let the sad frightened look in her brother’s eyes, in Tsuna’s eyes, hold her back from the fight. Because they’d done everything in their power to keep her safe last time, and she’d let them, because she loved them and they never looked so sad or afraid as when she suggested they might not always be able to protect her. She’d stayed at home, and let them protect her, and in the end all that had meant was that when they fell she couldn’t do anything to help or avenge them. She couldn’t even save herself.

Never again. Kyouko forced her toddler’s body to stand for the first time, and deep orange resolve flickered in the depths of her eyes.

…

Going fully active had taken time. It had taken time because she had time, so she could do it properly, gradually, without using the dangerous, do or die shortcuts that Reborn had used to train Tsuna that first time. Slow and steady and sure as sunrise, and it said something that this time, none of the boys had even tried to stop her. Just went to show they could learn from experience after all.

Her Hana was the first guardian she’d bonded, and of course Hana had been the one to come to her, had tracked her down first. Hana was the Cloud who drifted where she wished, and the place Hana had always chosen to drift was right beside Kyouko. The mind reading was a new and convenient development though. There were interesting possibilities in that.
More time, more guardians. Her Haru bright and unpredictable as always, and then Ipin, not so little this time around, clever clever Shoichi who hadn’t always been hers, who had once been hurt so deeply by a Sky that could have been his and yet still chose to trust her with his heart and soul, Spanner, who pretended so well that he didn’t care and thought no-one noticed the way he would follow Shoichi wherever he went without a moment’s hesitation. And last always the last to come in from the cold Basil, who was so alike and so different from Tsuna, who was almost certainly Tsuna’s brother even if none of them had ever said it out loud. Basil, who never quite let himself feel worthy of others’ regard.

Together, with their own gathered around them, she and Tsuna formed the beating heart of their academy class. They were the class idols and yet, indefinably more than that, and where they led, others would follow, even into hell. Sky charisma at its most compelling. From the outside it must look almost disturbing, even from the inside, she could tell that Tsuna at least found it unsettling. She didn’t. She knew she should probably feel a bit bad about the way she and Tsuna were simply by their presence, simply by being who they were, dividing the loyalty of their classmates, gaining influence with the next generation of ninja to be, Tsuna certainly did. But, Oniisan was worried, and Kusakabe was worried, and her Basil was worried, and she had a feeling at the back of her mind that they might just need that influence one day.

And Kyouko was good at being popular, at smiling and being charming, and wielding influence in all the subtle ways needed to make people love her, no-one got to be middle school school idol by accident. Sky flames really only enhanced those talents. She liked having influence, she liked being listened to, she liked being liked, and she was good at making sure she got those things. So she did. And really it wasn’t like it was even discouraged. The academy teachers seemed to find her efforts somewhere between amusing and praiseworthy. Her Kunoichi teacher actually gave her a gold star on her school report for “properly grasping the value of social manipulation”.

Besides, compared to the damaged pair of baby Skies in the year above, she and Tsuna were a positively benign influence. At least her Will and Tsuna’s were working in concert, in Harmony with each other (they always did have a lot in common). Sasuke and Naruto in contrast were constantly shifting between vicious competition and desperate longing for the home comfort the other could offer, and the rest of their class were caught in the riptide of conflicting competing Sky attraction, now pulled one way, now the other and hurting for it.

Their graduation had helped, somewhat. Given most of their class some space from the brewing Sky war, and some missions together had hammered them into some semblance of co-operation with each other. If they had been any ordinary young Skies that might have even been enough to settle them. But they were both too damaged for things to be that simple, too alone to be able to tolerate the competition, and too alone not to want each other’s full attention. And of course, it was her cousin Sakura that was caught in the middle.

Whichever idiot had thought putting those two on the same genin team was a good idea had a lot to answer for.

In any case, there were a number of reasons for Kyouko to be watching team seven (watching not stalking, no matter what Rokudo said and he really wasn’t in any position to comment anyway). For her cousin’s sake, for the sake of the little baby Skies that didn’t know what they were doing, for the sake of whatever innocent bystanders might get caught up in that mess. So she noticed when they ran into a team from Suna right before the chuunin exams. She noticed and the thought that registered most clearly was “oh shit”.

Because both Naruto and Sasuke were clearly interested in the little murder Cloud that scared even
his own teammates (no accounting for taste). And the murder Cloud clearly wasn’t stable enough to understand what he wanted from them, and she had a horrible feeling this was going to end in blood, or worse, a diplomatic incident.

...

She was right, although, it turned out the diplomatic incident was less of an incident, more of a full scale breakdown in relations, and it wasn’t actually a direct consequence of the team seven issues so there was that. It was all a bit chaotic really, the village had been invaded, the murder Cloud had lost it big time and gone on a rampage, and of course, team seven had followed. In the confusion, no one had really noticed when Kyouko and Haru had decided to discreetly follow them.

In the end there hadn’t been much for them to do except to hold the murder Cloud’s siblings back from interfering. They might be enemy ninja but that didn’t mean they needed to get caught between a rampaging Cloud and two Skies that didn’t even know they were fighting over him. No-one deserved that, and the girl was really quite pretty and attractively competent, letting her get minced would have been such a waste. Kyouko smiled brightly and gave the disbelieving kunoichi a quick kiss before letting Haru put them both to sleep.

Kyouko would admit to being slightly surprised that Naruto ended up being the one to successfully bond with the Cloud. She would have thought Sasuke’s more bloodthirsty impulses would have been more appealing to him. But then, on second thoughts, maybe it did make sense, Naruto was far better with people than Sasuke, maybe what baby murderCloud really wanted was for someone to love and understand him. Naruto could do that, Sasuke… really wasn’t in the right sort of place, mentally, to do that.

...

It was probably the best result that could have been expected. MurderCloud’s murderous rampage had been stopped, and he now seemed far happier and more stable. Baby Sky Naruto had a bonded guardian and might now stop being so pushy with her cousin. The village was still standing, none of the people she was personally attached to had died. All in all it had actually gone quite well. But she looked at the unconscious form of Uchiha Sasuke, and she worried. How would he react to being rejected in favour of Naruto, would he even understand why he felt that way? She didn’t know, but she suspected it couldn’t possibly end well, and despite herself she couldn’t help but feel invested. One of the lesser known side effects of long term surveillance on specific subjects. Briefly she even wondered if maybe it was time for her to take them all aside and have a little talk about Flames and how they worked. Secrecy was all very well, but at some point surely they had a duty of care.

Then the Uchiha defected and she decided it was probably for the best that they’d never got to that conversation. After all, the thought of a rogue Sky that actually knew what he was doing on the loose where they couldn’t monitor him was really a nightmare that didn’t bear thinking about.

Chapter End Notes

Not completely happy with this chapter. It feels like it kind of wandered off course and ended up including too much of Kyouko angsting and not enough Temari going wtf. This is not the start of any kind of meaningful romance between these two by the way. Just that Kyouko finds Temari attractive and has enough confidence not to be shy about it. Temari never knew getting hit on by an academy student could be this intimidating.
And yeah, Gaara is Naruto's Cloud. Naruto is about halfway to active, Gaara is actually active and using his Cloud Flames to propagate the sand he uses. Kyouko is the only one to have actually noticed this, but she tells Tsuna and co soon enough.
Confusion and incredulity

Chapter Summary

Temari is not sure what they feed the kids in the Konoha academy, but she is becoming pretty sure the invasion was a bad idea.

Chapter Notes

In which Temari decides all Konoha nin are crazy, which is probably why her crazy brother finds them so appealing.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Temari was becoming increasingly certain that there was something deeply wrong with Konoha ninja.

It was a suspicion that most Suna nin had felt at one point or another, after all, sane people wouldn’t willingly live in Fire Country forests. What with the venomous wildlife, and the poisonous plant life, and the unending bloody sea of trees that made it impossible to see more than a few feet ahead. At least in the desert you could see the snakes and scorpions coming. Any Suna ninja with sense would question the sanity of Konoha nin.

But there was a line between suspicions and certainty, and as far as Temari was concerned they were over that line and accelerating. There was something deeply wrong with this village.

The first indications were around Gaara of course. Because most of the insanity in Temari’s life could in some way be related back to her youngest brother. The first indications were Gaara and those two Konoha genin, and the weird as fuck energy between the three of them. It was bizarre, and intense, she’d actually felt a little uncomfortable watching them all together, what with Gaara’s semi-murderous focus, and the Uchiha’s semi-deranged challenge, and the Uchiha’s blond teammate’s completely unassailable enthusiasm. They’d all been deeply intent on each other, in one way or another, and she wasn’t sure what to think about it. She’d almost be tempted to call it some sort of… attraction, except that Gaara was a certified homicidal maniac who liked to kill people while giggling to himself and normal people did not find that sort of thing attractive. Normal people in fact, found that kind of thing terrifying, or at least worrying.

But then, it was becoming increasingly clear that Konoha ninja were not normal people.

Konoha ninja were the sort of people who dressed up in bright green jumpsuits with orange legwarmers and shouted about youth. Or half beat their own family members to death while muttering about fate. Or kept actual bugs inside their bodies. Or had a training ground that was officially called the Forest of Death. And the worst thing was, not a single Konoha nin seemed unsettled by any of this.

Suffice it to say by the time the attack was due to start Temari was having significant reservations about the idea of trying to invade this village. Fighting crazy people was a bad idea, they didn’t
know when to stop, it was impossible to predict their reactions, and you never knew just what horrors they might be prepared to unleash. And it anyone would know that for a fact it would be Temari, she was after all stuck on a team with Gaara, poster child for unstable homicidal maniacs with no impulse control. But of course, no-one listened to her, she warned them, they didn’t listen. In fact by the time she was done in the Forest of Death she really wasn’t sure why anyone would even want to invade Konoha. Not that there was any point in expressing that opinion. The Kazekage had given his orders, so they were invading this hellhole whatever anyone better informed might think about the subject.

Then of course, things started to get really weird, because even by ninja standards Konoha was fucked up, and escalation was the ninja way. So it turned out her father the Kazekage had been replaced several weeks ago by Orochimaru (incidentally a former Konoha ninja) who had managed to dress up in his skin and impersonate him, without anyone actually noticing. It was like one of Kankuro’s conspiracy theories, about the Sandaime Kazekage and the zombie puppet army, or the giant mind control rabbit that lives in the moon. Only in Konoha would shit like that turn out to actually be real.

By the time all of this had become clear of course the invasion was underway, and it was too late to back down, so she and Kankuro had taken the path of least resistance and followed Gaara, mostly as an excuse to avoid actually having to do anything, beyond making sure their brother didn’t wander off in the confusion. Gaara supervision duty generally covered a lot of questions along the lines of “and what were you doing during the fight”, mostly because no-one else wanted to risk getting stuck with the job. It had seemed like a solid plan for avoiding trouble, right up until the blond idiot with the weird tension with Gaara had turned out to be the kyuubi jinchuuriki, and he and their brother had commenced a full-fledged bijjuu showdown. Because what this situation really needed was a pair of giant chakra monsters throwing down on the village outskirts.

She had, vaguely considered interfering. Gaara was her brother after all, and a part of her always felt the rather futile urge to try and keep him out of trouble. Not that she’d have been able to do much, and not that Gaara wasn’t a full fledged mass murderer perfectly capable of looking after himself, but still, family was family and it was the principle of the thing. Honestly she blamed Kankuro, if he wasn’t such an absolute disaster, her default response to a little brother in trouble wouldn’t be to grab him by the scruff of the neck and drag him home. It was the kind of response that would probably lead to Gaara sand coffining her one of these days, but it really was a difficult instinct to unlearn.

But then before she could act on the slightly self destructive impulse to intervene, she and Kankuro got ambushed by Konoha academy students, as if they needed more proof that Konoha was fucked up. Actual academy students, seriously, intervening in a jinchuuriki level fight. She could tell by the lack of headbands, and the blunted weapons on the two girls, although they did at least look close to graduating. Still, did Konoha nin just not learn self preservation in the academy? What on earth were those kids doing out here? How did they get the drop on her? What did they want? And why was the lighter haired girl watching Gaara and the other jinchuuriki battering at each other like it was the most adorable thing she’d seen in weeks? As for their aura. It was unsettling. There wasn’t even any real anger or killing intent in it, just sheer force of will, looking for a target. What did Konoha even feed these kids?

Then to cap off the bizarre experience that the last few weeks had been, that same lighter haired girl had turned a benevolently terrifying smile on Temari and given her a gentle kiss right before everything faded to black. “You’re cute.” She heard the girl giggle as she passed out. It was one of the more terrifying things Temari had heard all week, even including Gaara’s usual litany of horrifyingly graphic death threats.

When Temari woke up to see Gaara cuddling with the Konoha jinchuuriki she’d given up. There
was just something deeply wrong with Konoha, and anyone who lived there. It was no wonder they’d gotten to Gaara. This place was crazy enough that he fitted right in. The following couple of hours only served to confirm her hypothesis, she’d heard stories from her fellow prisoners about the demon disguised as an academy student that had beaten the crap out of them after threatening to bite them to death, and the academy teacher that had summoned a giant octopus in the middle of the battle, and that one Hyuuga that had actually spontaneously combusted with rage when one of them got in between him and the Hyuuga clan elder whose head he’d been kicking in.

The sooner they all got out of this place and tried to forget all about it, the better as far as she was concerned. Fire country was no place for sensible people, and Gaara was crazy enough already, he did not need to be exposed to Konoha’s bad influences no matter how much he sulked about it.

Chapter End Notes

Poor Temari. She has no idea what's going on. She might just end up as Kazekage though, if she keeps giving the impression that she knows what she's doing.
Did anyone spot the Xanxus cameo. His pov should be coming up soon.
Oppression and opposition

Chapter Summary

Xanxus had quite enough of old men sealing him away to preserve their own power that last time around, he's certainly not going to stand for it this time.

Chapter Notes

In which Xanxus is born into the Hyuuga branch house and the main house has so many regrets, so many. (starts pre Tsuna and his guardians waking up)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

There was a certain look that people gave, Xanxus found, when they thought they were better than him. And not better because they were skilled, or worked for it, or even achieved anything, no, it was a look given by people who believed they were born better, and that nothing he did or achieved would ever change that. A kind of condescending, sneer, half pity, half triumph, and Xanxus hated it more than just about anything else in the world.

It was a look only the privileged and entitled knew how to give, and only the stupid indulged in. It was a look Xanxus had more than enough of in his first life, and was less than inclined to indulge now that he was on round number two. If they didn’t learn quickly, well, Xanxus was not a patient teacher.

Not all the highborn trash were that stupid of course. A lot of them were, but not all, and the smarter ones, the trash that could look beyond their own advantages, their own pride in their status, knew better than to assume someone wasn’t a threat just because they were low born. Old, old men, and women, with cunning in their eyes and cages at their fingertips and there was another thing Xanxus had more than enough of in his last life.

They had come at him with lying smiles, and calculating eyes and a seal to place on his forehead, to bind him, and rule him, and ensure he would never be a threat to the main line, the legitimate line’s power. He had felt the chakra of the seal settling around his mind, and it was like a cage, like being trapped, like ice, like a half memory of something that his mind couldn’t, quite reach, until it could, and he did remember, and the fire in his soul screamed never again.

They came with clever well practiced words about duty, and tradition, and loyalty, and Hyuuga Xanxus, who had once been Xanxus di Vongola, said, “Fuck that shit. Never again.” And the seal they had so carefully drawn onto him burned away in a blaze of red and orange fire and rage.

They feared him after that, and they were wise to. The smarter ones feared all of their branch house cousins, as only the oppressor can fear the oppressed. Deep down every oppressor knows one terrible truth, that their victims are stronger than they are, and they live in fear of the day their victims realise it.

Xanxus had realised it first when he was ten years old, when he first made one of his supposed
father's underbosses flinch. When he’d sparked red and orange fire off his fingertips, and the man that had sneered at him for being a prostitute’s son, and dismissed him as irrelevant for his rough manners, had taken a step back in fear and Xanxus had seen his weakness. They might have looked at him like trash, but he knew, now he knew, they were the real trash.

The second time around the knowledge had come earlier, had come with his awakening, although he’d had inklings even before than, it had come with iron solid conviction that if the main house trash feared him enough to cage him then he must be stronger than them. After all the powerful have no need to cage the weak.

Before, the clever ones had feared him, as they feared all their caged cousins. After, well after, even the stupid ones feared him, and it was not the same as the fear they felt for any of the others. It was open, raw, salt in the wound every time he swaggered through the gates like he didn’t recognise their superiority. It was a fear mixed with outrage, with disbelief, with a kind of fascinated horror and Xanxus revelled in it.

It wasn’t just a fear of him, personally, although it was that too, Xanxus had made sure of that, with unpredictable violence, and a vengeful streak that had some of them flinching at the sight of him. More importantly it was a fear of what he represented, a slave that would not serve, a victim that had learned to bite back, living proof that defiance was possible, that their masters could bleed. He was a threat to the very foundations of their world.

In a previous life Xanxus had made it his mission, and private amusement to terrify the mafia establishment. Primarily by being everything they had assured themselves a prostitute’s bastard could not be. He had been dangerous, had been the best, had been Varia quality and even then people had known what that meant. He had been powerful, had been the son of the Vongola Don, not the heir, but the strongest in his own right of all his father’s sons. And worst of all he had been cultured, had made a point of it, cultivating a taste for the fine wines, and gourmet cooking, and classical music, that the elites had fawned over, trampling all over their private domain of high culture with his bloodied, bastard born shoes. He had made a lifestyle out of not knowing his place, and he saw no reason to let being reborn change the habit of a lifetime.

Squalo had found it utterly hilarious. So much so that he’d laid his sword at Xanxus’ feet, and sworn to him. The others had followed, all outsiders in their own way, all in their own way a personal affront to the traditionalist elites. They saw the game he played, saw it and were only too happy to join in, and he felt their absence so strongly when he faced down his clan elders for that first time without them. If he hadn’t known already that half of them were his classmates and the others couldn’t be too far off he would have raged, enough to burn the Hyuuga compound down around him. But they were here so he didn’t have to. Which was probably good, because he suspected the baby boss would probably turn up at some point and if Xanxus was on the run for arson and mass murder he’d do the “I am very disappointed look”. Which would be annoying.

It hadn’t taken much to re-gather his guardians, a flare of his flames here, strategic employment of violence there, he’d even managed to wake up the idiot horse in the process. Xanxus would never admit it, but he had missed Dino, the horse trash wasn’t nearly as ditzy as he pretended to be and Xanxus could appreciate someone who played their own games with the old guard.

Dino had actually offered him refuge, if he’d wanted to leave the Hyuuga compound. As some kind of peripheral relative to the Sandaime he apparently could offer that without the Hyuuga elders being able to block him. Idiot. Like Xanxus needed rescuing. He had the trash right where he wanted them, moving out would undo so much of his hard work in turning them into quivering shadows of themselves. Right now he was in their home, eating at their table, watching over them while they slept, a constant reminder of their weaknesses, and their sins. If he left, well, sooner or later they’d
start to forget and that would be annoying.

 Besides, it would be much harder to train the brat up to Varia quality if he wasn’t living in the compound.

Chapter End Notes

Yep, the brat is indeed Neiji who has been following Xanxus around like a lost puppy. No Xanxus didn't stop the Hyuuga incident happening. Why you ask, well, the incident happens only a couple of years after Xanxus wakes up and he hasn't had time to fully put the fear of him into the clan elders yet, so they haven't changed their behaviour. When the incident goes down, Xanxus is miles away on his first C rank, and therefore knew nothing until weeks after the fact, thus he couldn't intervene personally. (I'm sorry but I needed Hizashi to die, so that Neiji latches on to Xanxus properly.)

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