Diplopia

by blacknoise

Summary

Uchiha Obito lost everything, and sacrificed even more, for a foolish hope for a better world. Robbed of his one chance to change the world, he is brought back to Konoha to answer for his actions. He begins to discover what lies beyond the end of the road.
Chapter 1

Rin, I tried…

The Juubi’s fractured howl had ripped the very air apart, the scent of sharp ozone mingling suddenly with the ever-present blood and dust. A great wind swirled around him, lines of powerful sealing magic digging and pulling into his abdomen, tearing him open—

—Oh god, oh god —

Ripping him wide open, evert his everything like a black hole in reverse, the universe spilling forth from his collapsing, overtaxed body.

He thought of Kushina in that moment, how this pain must be his karmic payoff for what he’d done to her. There could be no greater pain imaginable, and he had become something of an expert on pain. This was like rusty blades over every quaking inch of one’s body. Inside. Everywhere.

When it finally stopped, when he was as empty as before and the Juubi long gone, his knees gave out and he fell onto the fragments of shale.

He made a small, pressured noise of frustration.

Why was he still alive?

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“Do it. Finish it.”

“I can’t, I CAN’T !!!”

Thwack.

Thwack.

His head was swimming. Thwack. There was blood in his nose, in his mouth. Thwack. His hearing and vision went fuzzy, fading out and going blurry at the edges.

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Held down—can’t move—hands all over, everywhere, touching, seeing…

“Shizune—fingertips on his occipital chakra array. Sakura, with me—”

“Yes, Tsunade-shishou. The chiasm and the tracts?”
“Yes, exactly. Hyuugas?”

“Optic chakra flow detected, Tsunade-sama. Ready on your mark.”

“Then let’s neuter this piece of shit. Three, two—”

Screaming. Someone... someone—

No-one.

No... more. No more. “Please—”

My voice? Who—

M—

Screaming.

—

He woke to a deluge of icy water dashed in his face. The natural physiological reaction was to gasp, and he did, jerking awake on a concrete floor, looking around wildly with eyes that could see, but could not see. There were eight Konoha-nin in the room with him, on guard and fighting ready, yet he couldn’t see the temporal contrails of their future movements, nor, more critically, the wrinkles in space-time that he used to anchor his Kamui. It was flat, simple, basic...what passed for “sight” among civilians.

He couldn’t see.

A spike of pain lanced through his skull then, vision spiking white and ears ringing. He turned over, trembling, and vomited. He heard some faint, unpleasant laughter.

Something was very, very wrong.

Obito struggled to get to his feet, but his legs were treacherous and he could barely clamber to all fours.

A sharp kick to his gut had him collapsing all over again, retching and dry-heaving. He hadn’t seen that foot coming, nor been able to slip through the attack.

“Uchiha,” the owner of the boot said coldly, as Obito tried to look up at his assailant, “Welcome back to Konoha. I am Morino Ibiki, and I am here to assure that your stay is just as pleasant as a guest of your... station... deserves.”

A large shadow blotted out the light, and the man crouched near Obito, gripping his jaw painfully and turning his head until he was looking into a face nearly as scarred as his own, one vaguely remembered from earlier days.

“But first, we need information from you. You will give it to us.”

Obito sneered. Spat. Was punched across the face—close range and hard for his trouble.

“Now, now. As I’m sure you can imagine, the better you cooperate, the less we’ll beat the shit out of you. And I promise, Uchiha Obito, every single ninja in this room wants nothing more than to beat you senseless.”
The interrogations began, not with questioning but with humiliation. He was bound, stripped, blasted with cold, stinging water from a pressurized hose. He was forced naked to his knees, hooded, spread and opened and checked for contraband or hidden weaponry.

“Look at this freak’s body,” one of the younger ones hissed, even as they lifted his scrotum, turned his thighs the way they wanted for their search, overpowering him despite his resistance, “It’s such a mess. Disgusting!”

They pried his mouth open, looking for false teeth, for cyanide pills.

They found none, and yet one of the other interrogators used pliers to twist out a molar on his left side, the sudden pain of which caused Obito to howl as his mouth filled with blood.

They asked him, over and over, “Where is Yamato?” “Where is special operative Tenzou?”

He said nothing. Gave them nothing. What did it matter?

As his jaw ached and swelled (regrowing a whole molar through a bruise), they switched to jamming bamboo shoots under his fingernails, small acid burns on his prosthetic skin—they knew he would heal there quickly, so they could do it over and over again without him fainting.

They were fools. Obito knew pain like he knew his mother’s scent. After a life like his, from the rock that should have killed him, to the pain of a love lost, to the soul-shredding agony of the Juubi’s extraction. Physical torture was nothing. He may have shivered, he may have cried out, but just as often, he laughed, dark blood dribbling down his chin, his limbs askew and twitching. He laughed. There was no reason to be kind, to give anything to these trash.

One way or another, he would die here.

That was fine.

The days were getting colder.

Somehow, this was the first thing to rise clear and unencumbered out of the murky haze of Obito’s thoughts. He was cold. Wet. He shivered.

Time was passing.

The world—somewhere above, somewhere without—the world was moving forward, a polluted lie wobbling on a rusting axis.

The first emotion to pass through him was hatred. Strong, sure, familiar hate. His ballast in uncertain times. His war was over. His hopes were dashed. That hatred receded quickly though, leaving him empty once more. It was still easier, he reasoned, not to feel at all.

Time was passing. His eyes itched.
He wasn’t sure if they were deliberately starving him, or if they knew that his prostheses sustained him without food. Neither seemed terribly unlikely.

Obito had been thankful, at the very least, that they had not noted the tension he felt at being confined and indoors.

Then, on the third day, they did.

It was time for the water torture again. Seven days in, Obito had gotten used to the desperate burn of his lungs, the sparks flashing in his vision as he pulled in gasping breaths whenever he was allowed. The smothering, panic-inducing sensation of drowning. The near-constant headache that followed, blurring his thoughts so that the barrage of interrogation questions were diluted into background noise he could scarcely comprehend.

It was time for the water torture again. Time for more of that gleeful sadism glittering in Ibiki’s eyes. Obito closed his eyes in the dark of his cell, where they now held him bound, wrists, ankles, and neck, to the dank and frigid stone wall.

Then—footsteps. Obito heard them, long pauses indicative of a long stride, even—almost too measured—steps. Another guard most likely, but then—

“Hatake-senpai!”

Emotion convulsed across Obito’s face for a moment; the defeated snarl of a wounded animal. Not him.

“I’ve come to talk,” Kakashi said then, and his voice was steady but subdued, as though it were aiming for authoritative but came up just short.

The last Obito had seen of Kakashi, they had been grappling in the dirt, grabbing and pulling at each other like animals. Obito had been so weak, so exhausted from his de facto exorcism, that he’d lacked the chakra to even augment a single punch. Kakashi had been little better, the overtaxed rasp in his breath and the trickle of blood running freely from his Sharingan leaving little doubt as to that fact. Obito dimly recollected the mad fury that had overtaken him at having been so very close, only to have had everything torn away in the end. He had attacked Kakashi with everything he had left, with his nails and fists and teeth and words.

Kakashi had gained the upper hand, shoving inside Obito’s reach and gripping him tight around the throat, thumbs pressing on his carotids, squeezing in on his trachea. And Obito had gone lightheaded and delirious, had urged Kakashi on even as his vision went progressively darker around the edges.

“Do it,” he’d mouthed, air barely creeping past his vocal cords, “Finish it…” He could feel merciful death moments away, in the slowing of his heart and the slackening of his limbs. Kakashi had looked down at him with wild eyes, half crazed with a plethora of emotions; guilt, grief, and anger. Obito had believed in him—in Kakashi’s ability to end his life.

And yet, even at this most perfect, imperfect moment, Kakashi broke. He waffled. He failed.

Obito had been taken, bound, effectively blinded. He’d been violated, tortured—he would say he’d
been broken if there’d been anything left to break. As it was, in time, even the hysterical laughter had faded to a heavy sort of silence. Now he lived on, waiting for a death that wouldn’t come. A prisoner of an existence he abhorred.

It was hard to imagine ever having hated Kakashi more.

Was a death, ignoble and dirty and base, a simple putting down of a wounded, rabid thing… was that really so much to ask?

They were alone. Strange, but not wholly unexpected. Though he kept his gaze forward, locked on the neutral mid-distance between himself and the opposite blank wall, he could hear no footsteps beyond Kakashi’s own. Meaning that Kakashi had presumed that he’d be open to talk if were just the two of them.

Obito was tired. He was tired and he was in no mood.

He closed his eyes. It was time for the water torture. He prepared himself for the sting of aspirated fluid, the close pressing terror of being unable to breathe. For the cold.

He wouldn’t let himself think of Rin. He’d lost that right.

“You’re wasting your time,” he heard himself say. The words came muffled, warped around a swollen jaw that would surely have become infected if not for his Senju tissues’ vitality. Hoarse and deadened, he barely recognized his own voice.

He didn’t owe Hatake a damn thing, he reminded himself. Not after the man’s frankly impressive track record of failure.

“Special operative Yamato was apprehended by your compatriot, Yakushi Kabuto the week of your capture—Where is he?”

There was a tangible bitterness in Kakashi’s voice that told Obito quite plainly that emotions were slipping, perhaps unbidden, into his clinical, professional bearing. Obito didn’t need to so much as glance Kakashi’s way to sense it. He could feel Kakashi’s eyes as they landed on his face, on his body, no doubt taking in the old scars as much as the new. He hoped Kakashi found them upsetting.

He was an impossible creature, he knew that well. His body was a patchwork horror of hybrid tissue and hypertrophic scarring, of uneven features and denervated muscle that sagged, loose and lax. For all the damage he’d sustained that day, he shouldn’t be alive. There were rock fragments buried into his brain even now, shielded and walled off by the regenerative cells of his prosthesis. His liver had been obliterated, half his chest crushed.

Even with years of healing, he would never, never look the same.

And now, with a plethora of new scarring, with the red throbbing golf ball swelling out of his left jaw, a few open wounds left to weep…

Well, he hoped Kakashi was getting an eyeful.

He hoped it stoked Kakashi’s guilt until it burned away at his gut like an ulcer.

The setting sun angled sharply into the cell, shining brightly, painfully, into Obito’s left eye. He shut his eyes to avoid the harsh light, but the red impression shone even through his eyelids.

“Yamato, was it?” he murmured hoarsely, and of course the image of Senju Hashirama’s clone came
immediately to his mind; the man’s body syncing seamlessly with their great tree, arteries and veins turned to xylem and phloem, skin melding into bark. He had greatly increased the number and strength of Obito’s army. He’d been useful.

Yet here Obito was, farther from his ultimate dream than ever. So what good could come of revealing Yamato’s location to them?

He would not let them have everything, these corrupt smug sycophants so eager to continue whatever passed for “living” in a world gone to utter madness. He would not.

He laughed a little, even though it hurt terribly. Even though his laughter sounded more like the hissing of a wounded cat.

“Why don’t you go look for him yourself?” And here, a chance to be cruel. Good. “Can’t stand letting another comrade down?”

“Enough. Not here. You’re wasting my time, and making it more painful for yourself.”

They both knew that pain would never be enough to break Obito.

Obito laughed again but the sound faded off fast until his laughter, mean and weak as it already was, degenerated to a hoarse hacking cough that surprised even him. The motion of his coughing sparked sharp, vicious pain in his ribcage—points where his ribs had likely been broken in the short time of his captivity. Flecks of spittle landed on his lips and his lungs burned so badly he winced, no doubt some residual water from his last round of torture.

“Waste your time?” he hissed incredulously, “Your time, Kakashi? Didn’t you hear the first thing I said?” Obito finally turned his head slightly to regard Kakashi with narrowed eyes. Laying eyes on Kakashi, as expected, ignited the angry dark flame in his gut, brought old memory crashing down around him, swimming in front of his tired, aching eyes. It may have been a trick of the light, but there was something in Kakashi’s gaze that read as pained, as desperate. What little of his face could be seen had paled at Obito’s cruel laughter. “I have no reason to help you, none. Sorry to waste your time. Why don’t you go sniff him out?”

The gloomy light had faded, and the night began to crowd in around them gradually, shadows lengthening and deepening, the chill penetrating the dank cells even more. Obito continued to cough, and his body shivered, subtly but still enough to rattle his chakra-dampening chains. They made noise that Obito was certain Kakashi could hear. He couldn’t stop his body though; he was barely dressed, his clothing filthy and in thin tatters, and still damp, always damp.

“You could always torture me yourself, you know,” Obito invited, and it was a bare whisper now, his throat raw and tired. “But I’ve got nothing more to say to you.” He hoped the sight of him broke Kakashi’s heart.

He didn’t care anymore.

He hadn’t cared in a very long time.

Kakashi scoffed at him. “So you could feel righteous? Be the martyr of your own twisted story, Obito? I’m not going to do that.”

It wouldn’t have made him feel righteous—he didn’t need anything from Kakashi to prove that his
cause had been just. He’d been right.

No, having Kakashi torture him would have been done for the pure spite of it. Try as he might, Kakashi had failed to maintain the dry neutrality he was so obviously attempting to convey.

Obito knew the signs of emotional upset—he’d certainly walked that line often enough himself—and moreover, he knew Kakashi on levels few could hope to match. He remembered their most intimate moment on the battlefield; Kakashi poised above him, squeezing at his throat, his whole body set to kill. Yet he’d faltered. Kakashi’s steely resolve had crumbled like dry, unfired clay.

Obito knew why.

Kakashi, like him, was far too entrenched in regret, far too shackled to the pain of the past to move forward. Obito oscillated between rage and apathy, Kakashi between loneliness and guilt.

They were similar men, Obito mused, only Kakashi had refused to open his eyes and see a lasting, viable solution.

*Why are you deluding yourself, Kakashi? Why keep up the lie?*

The lie was all they had left, though—all of Obito’s plans had come to naught.

Obito bared his teeth once more; it was the best he could manage in his compromised state. He could nearly taste the bitterness that lingered heavy in the air, tainting the scant few feet between the two men—the ruined remnants of Team Minato.

Kakashi turned away, and Obito saw that it taxed him to do so, as if he wanted nothing more than to escape, but something slowed his steps. Something was dragging him back the other way. Eventually the jounin mastered himself, his face sliding into its true mask beneath the strip of cloth that covered his nose and mouth. He began to walk away.

Obito spat at Kakashi’s retreating back, though with the distance and angle nothing came close to making contact. It was the sound that mattered. He wanted Kakashi to leave with the sound of his contempt.

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His body would not let him die.

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Every day from predawn until long after dusk, they tortured him. They flayed him and suffocated him and burned him—one ambitious interrogator doused him with a bucketful of privy contents, the smell of which made him gag and retch, made his eyes water.

They asked the same questions again and again.

He gave them nothing, his stare progressively deadening as they continued their grisly work. They took the light away from him, blocking the windows of his cell and shackling him, turned around, to face the wall. By now Ibiki understood. He’d read Obito’s personnel file and knew what had ended his life. Obito was then forced to endure the feel of solid rock grazing his cheek, the close crowding darkness of his cell without light, the meager, dim vision of stone the only thing he was permitted to look at.

Until they tortured him again.
And every evening, when they were finished with him for the day, when he’d given them nothing and yet they left for home content with their good work, Kakashi would come. Kakashi would arrive minutes after Obito’s last interrogator had left. Kakashi would ask the same questions—Where is Yamato? Tell me.

And Obito would reply with nothing but rattling breath, and otherwise heavy silence. Kakashi still kept coming back.

His body would not let him die.

Weeks into his incarceration now, Obito began to realize that the Senju tissue grafts were acting as life support as they always had, but only barely. Not enough to mask pain or heal all wounds. Only enough for him to continue suffering and not die.

Obito was so, so tired of the world and everything in it, but his body doggedly kept his heart beating, his brain aware.

He didn’t understand why they had not simply executed him for his supposed crimes. He’d certainly earned no less.

He wished vehemently, one cold morning (a morning he could only discern because the new shift of guards had come in and were making idle small-talk down the hall), that they had destroyed the great tree—Senju Hashirama’s living clone—during the war. Without the tree’s steady chakra, his grafted body parts would stop healing him. He would have died and been free of this wretched existence.

When it came to him finally, he laughed again. It was so quiet now, just a quiver of his shoulders, breath huffed against the unforgiving rock.

Why in the world had he been so stubborn?

The answer was right there all along.

Obito resolved to endure the day with new strength. He would need to save his energy and words for Kakashi’s visit tonight.

It was a chill afternoon and the breath fogged in front of Obito’s lips. Predictably, mechanically, Kakashi came. He stood where he always stood. Said what he always said. “Captain Yamato,” It sounded almost scripted. It was. “Where is he? Tell me.”

Obito drew breath. His lungs felt heavy, as though they were weighed down by an unseen force. He was so tired. His lips cracked as he made to open them.

“You want to know?” He asked softly, and his voice trembled in time with his frigid body. Just make it through this, he told himself, let him run and fetch and do what he couldn’t do willingly.

He’d lived for far too long.

“So persistent, Kakashi… I’m getting tired of seeing your face down here every day. Fine, I’ll tell you.”
A coughing spell took him then, shaking him so hard that he nearly retched. The rock wall pressed against his cheek, a grim and disquieting reminder of pain, of the beginning of his life’s descent into hell. It was fine. This was fine. It wouldn’t be long now.

He’d be free of Kakashi, free of Konoha, free of the mess that this existence had become. The sweet promise of nothingness was almost unbearably alluring.

“You’ll find the entrance at the root of a large, crooked jack pine two and a half kilometers south-southwest of the western gate of Kirigakure. Fetch, boy. Fetch—” he broke off coughing again. Everything hurt.

“—and let me be.”

Kakashi’s breath paused. Obito imagined all of him pausing, frozen, considering. Kakashi was no fool, he’d have to be wondering why Obito had decided to offer up information he’d guarded jealously until now. But Obito knew Kakashi wouldn’t afford himself long to consider it. He had a lead on a missing comrade. And apparently these days that meant something to the man. Another half-second passed, then Kakashi bolted from his place at Obito’s cell like a hunting dog set loose.

Obito allowed himself a private smirk of satisfaction as Kakashi’s hurried footsteps faded off down the hall. The sound ended with the slam of the heavy door that separated the secure holding cells from the rest of the world. The silence that descended in its wake was strange, and in some ways totally new.

There was a grim sort of hope in that new silence, the promise of an end suddenly secured.

Obito pressed his forehead wearily back against the stone, ignoring the wave of nausea that came with the cold, gritty contact.

Now, to wait.

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Days passed.

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He felt the change immediately.

There was a jolt that ran through him at first, and he imagined it as getting struck by lightning, or the dread, sinking feeling of a stopping heart. The sensation suffused him, quickly replacing vitality with fatigue, the steady even pulse of blood with a slow, thready trickle.

Thirst struck him then, and it was like nothing he could have prepared himself for. His mouth felt devoid of all moisture, his throat parched and swallowing at nothing.

Then hunger came, raw and tearing.

Then pain.

The pain he now felt far eclipsed anything he thought he’d experienced in his captivity so far. He couldn’t stop himself from crying out, and it was a hoarse, reedy sound that he scarcely recognized.

This was worth it. This would all be worth it in the end.

He broke into a cold sweat.
This was fine.

As more days passed, the manacles and shackles sat progressively looser against his bones, digging into thinning tissue more and more. There were raw patches to his skin that swelled and throbbed, that were crusted with thin clear fluid from his ruptured skin.

Obito felt warm despite the chill of the cell. He wasn’t able to sweat anymore, dehydrated as he was, and his head pounded painfully. He tried not to think of water, but it dripped steadily from his leaking ceiling, spattering to the ground mere feet out of reach.

The guards still came by to pay him their respects.

Without questions to ask, without any interrogation objective, they resorted to using him as a way to vent their frustrations. They beat him and humiliated him, and over time Obito lost the strength to resist even the slightest injury. What he once would have borne without flinching now sent him crashing to the floor.

It was on the floor that they left him when they were done with him, starved and bloody and feverish. One sneering guard had thrown a thin, filthy sheet over him, barking that Obito’s naked skin was revolting, that he should spare them all the sight of it.

By now, Obito couldn’t tug the sheet over himself to save his own life.

It was a good thing he had no intention of doing so.

Obito thought of Kakashi in spite of himself. With his companion undoubtedly rescued, he wondered if Kakashi would ever return to see him laid low, to witness him in his weakened state.

His breath began to come faster, more shallow. He began to wonder if he’d live that long.

Consciousness faded in and out, sound disjointed from sight disjointed from thought. There was a dreamlike haze over everything, all his senses muddled and far from his grasp. Obito drifted here, feeling the cold air sink deeper into his bones, slowly winning out against the fever that had sapped his strength. Sound suddenly lanced through the fog, and Obito drew an instinctive, rattling breath. Even here at his lowest, he knew that voice. He knew its owner.

Perhaps it was fitting that Kakashi would be here to see him die a second time. He hoped it burned him. He hoped the sight carved itself into Kakashi’s memory, never gave him a moment’s rest.

He couldn’t find the strength to lift his head, even as he heard the concern build in Kakashi’s voice, the panicked shifting of steps in front of the bars of his cage. He thought he heard him call for the guards. He thought he heard the cell door open. He was turned over into someone’s grasp then, half-pulled into a lap. Vision resolved slowly into silver hair and blue fatigues. He blinked, struggling to clear his sight. It was so dim, wasn’t it?

But his eyes found Kakashi’s, and once they did, they locked on with a savage hunger that dwarfed even the gnawing pit in his stomach.

See, he willed the Jounin, who stared down at him in horror, realization dawning in his eyes. Obito’s body trembled feebly with just the effort of looking, and his vision began to gray at the edges. See what you’ve done, Kakashi, and despair.

He coughed once, blood and bile flecking his lips, then his eyes rolled back and he knew no more.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

A recovery, and a new kind of punishment.

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His first conscious breath was a massive disappointment.

He had drifted in a still and smothering darkness for an uncertain amount of time. It had been quiet, simple, absolute. Obito had trusted that darkness. He’d given himself over to the finality of it; that if there was no afterlife, no consciousness, no thought—even the stillness was better than the pain of living.

When he felt pain again, he’d had the vague impression that this was a punishment of sorts. Perhaps it was how Hell manifested itself, in aching, throbbing discomfort for eternity.

Obito was unimpressed. He’d known worse hells than this.

But when the hollowness around him coalesced in sound as clipped murmurs, as the steady beeping of monitors, he knew better. It was in anger, such bitter, futile anger, that he awoke. As his eyes opened and light poured in, bringing with it the sterile cold of a hospital room, the obstructive presence of a blue plastic tube occupying half his vision, Obito fully understood the meaning of this new hell.

There was something in his throat, making him gag, making him cough and struggle. He wanted to arch and thrash, but even this was beyond his ability. The scant amount he was able to move tugged at his wrists and collar, as though he was tethered there by still more plastic (and thin clear tubes, heavy with fluids, that dangled to either side of him, that fed into his body). He couldn’t vocalize anything; he could only gurgle around the mass in his trachea.

He wanted to pull it out. He wanted to scratch at his face.

He felt like he was drowning.

A nurse came in after what seemed like an eternity of his struggling, her face a mask of clinical apathy, with barely-disguised disdain shining viciously in her eyes. “Awake, are you?” she murmured, taking a long span of time to don a pair of latex gloves. She took hold of the large blue tube and Obito could hear the sound of plastic latches being released, feel vibration against his dry lips. “I’ll admit,” she said conversationally, “most of us were hoping for a different outcome.”
Then she gave a sharp tug, painful like glass shards in his throat, and pulled the tubing free.

Obito’s eyes watered instantly, he gagged and gasped. He still couldn’t use his voice. His hands shook.

The nurse smiled faintly. She turned to switch off one of the machines, then returned with a small device that made a hollow sucking noise.

“Can’t have you drowning in your own secretions, can we?” she said, and there was regret audible in her voice. She eased the tool past his gaping, straining mouth and drew out the moisture that threatened to choke him.

He could still taste blood.

When she was done (and by now Obito had already closed his eyes, already tried to will himself back into the deathlike sleep that had been his purgatory) she haphazardly strapped a mask over the lower half of his face; one that blew cool air on his skin, and would have made it marginally easier to breathe, had it not been completely askew.

The nurse turned to leave. “Breathe. Or don’t. None of us here care which.”

Obito tried not to, but his body wouldn’t listen.

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He fell into a feverish sleep not long thereafter, and his dreams were full of the ghost of her, of all he’d lost. Of the heavy, crushing pressure of tons of rubble, the shards of bone ripping into pulverized muscle.

Of hands, strangely gentle, faintly trembling, that touched his jaw, his ear, his cheek.

And suddenly made breathing easier.

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His whitened hair had thinned to brittle fragments, and much of it had fallen out altogether. He felt each and every air current against his scalp.

His arms were like lead. The hospital sheets felt heavy on his body, as though they could hold the entirety of him down, pin him down and never let him rise. He was thin enough to blow away in a gust of wind, and the scant pressure of threadbare linen could keep him grounded.

He glanced out the window. It was wet and gray outside. Dead leaves swirled in the air, the wind so strong he could hear it through the small gaps in the frame.

Obito wanted to be out there, whipped by leaves and pelted by rain. Yanked off his feet and hurled into the sky until he inevitably fell again, plummeted into a vast, cold, stormy sea and was swept away.

The windows were barred, and triply warded.

He couldn’t stop shivering.

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They attempted to feed him, some days (or weeks) later.
At first they offered a spoonful of broth, thin and simple. At even this, Obito’s body rebelled violently. He retched so hard his battered body curled, strained against the restraints.

He tried to remember his last meal.

It had been eighteen years.

Just the touch of liquid into a gut long since atrophied set off a vicious chain reaction inside him, so strong he could hear his insides roaring in protest.

They tried again. They tried again and again until he was a sweating, nauseous wreck that ached from mouth to asshole, until the cramps punched rasping, agonized sounds out of his reluctant throat.

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And in the night he dreamed again, this time of cool water on his brow, a gentler touch wiping the sick from his face.

Rin was there, wasn’t she?

He could almost see—almost touch—

But her ghost moved through him, oh, and she was gone.

The cool water lingered, though. The hands, too.

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“—past the worst of it and tolerating simple foods now, despite extensive villous atrophy and—”

“—wanted your word he’d be treated better than—”

“—a criminal? A monster? You should know better, boy. It’s not ethical, but in their minds they have every right to—”

“—unacceptable—”

—

Obito cracked his eyes open sometime later. There was someone at his bedside, and his tired eyes saw at once that it was not medical personnel. No, the sight of his visitor curdled anger in the pit of his aching stomach, anger and that fey hysterical feeling of impossibility. Why had he come? Why the hell could Hatake not just let him die?

Obito made to speak, but his throat had become so raw that it came out as a faint hiss. “Come to gloat, Kakashi?”

He, ostensibly, had not. Kakashi made surprised eye contact briefly, but his gaze flickered to the far wall quickly, shoulders setting into a more rigid position. Like a hunting dog on point, Kakashi sat at Obito’s bedside, ignoring his bitter words and staring into the middle distance. With a mask and a hitai-ate that obscured so much, there remained an inscrutable darkness in that lone grey eye, something Obito, even in his haze, even with his own eyes neutralized, could clearly see.

Was it guilt? Grief? Loathing?

Kakashi was so very stoic, so very much the bulwark, the battlement built on shifting sand. On
He remained there silent, his very existence mocking Obito’s failure. Obito had failed to change the world, to save it from itself. And now he had failed to die, for all his efforts.

Kakashi lingered in his vision like a tumour, omnipresent even when Obito closed his eyes. Obito’s spirit reacted violently to him; this man was a traitor of his heart, the very symbol of misplaced faith. And yet he knew that Kakashi had tried. He’d put everything on the line and still failed. That, more than anything else, was proof positive that the world was inherently flawed.

That oaths were made of water.

That no good ever came of love, of trust, of believing.

They hovered in a charged silence for a long span of time, Obito too weak to swing the IV pole at Kakashi’s head (as he’d now visualized many times over), and Kakashi sitting, silent and imperfectly absent. Standing guard or passing judgement, Obito couldn’t be sure which.

He tested his throat, steeled his fragile husk of a body so that his words would not go unheard. He fixed his gaze, no doubt gaunt and terrible, on Kakashi the way he did on that prison cell floor.

“You should give up,” he murmured, and the articulation split cracks in his dry lips, burdened his heavy, cottony tongue. “They’ll just as likely kill me here before Konoha even gets the chance. You and I both know the Hokage is just prettying me up for a public execution. Can’t miss the chance to give the village one last show, right?”

He wondered how they’d do it. Seppuku was commonplace, but reserved for those given the chance to die with dignity, to dictate the terms of their demise. He doubted very much that Konoha would grant him that. In times past, when the Uchiha were still the executors of the law, the worst crimes would be punished by immolation; a literal firing squad. Obito doubted they’d let Sasuke do the honours. For rogues and criminals without honour, it was often a public beheading. That would likely be his fate.

He leaned up a little, and the lightheadedness that resulted lent a delirious edge to his biting, snarling words.

“Will you be there, Kakashi?” he rasped, virulence flaring stronger than the pain and ruin of his gut.

“Will you be the one to swing the blade?” It would be fitting. Perhaps they’d force him to do it. Perhaps that would kill the last stubborn spark left in him, let him finally come full circle and see what it meant to truly despair. “Perhaps it will finally satisfy you,” Obito hissed, and he couldn’t miss the break in Kakashi’s supposedly ironclad demeanor, the shocked, pained little saccades that his eye made, how it darted to Obito and away. Mere milliseconds of contact, more cracks in his veneer.

The lights in the hospital room seemed far too bright. Obito’s vision swam and he fell back against the thin pillow, spent and trembling. He panted shallowly in the wake of such small effort, his body already threatening to pull him back down into the comfort of oblivion.

Kakashi… when you imagine the future, what is it that you see? I see darkness, I see the end. My sight is closed to tomorrow. And I can feel it—I know yours is too.

Give up.

“Shut up,” the stilted words came eventually, more muffled behind the cloth mask than usual. “Rest.”
The days stretched into weeks, weeks of bright sterile cool in place of filthy dark. Obito measured the days in meals, in congee and broth and barley tea and the sensation of razor blades slicing into his belly. He’d come to know the faces (the disdainfully curled lips, the bared teeth), of his caregivers. Even the routine (most likely pathological) visits from Hatake Kakashi were now carried out in complete silence like a ritual, a precise hour of time carved into Obito’s day with a sick sort of determination.

Thankfully, some of his old familiar apathy had returned. Only apathy could equip him to endure the daily humiliation of sponge-baths and catheter checks. He’d retreated into a festering, virulent sort of silence, resigned himself to an end that was coming, despite being outside his control.

The parade of faces changed one day, replacing the dour glares of middle-aged nurses and burly orderlies with a younger, fresher face with eyes like polished jade. Obito laboured to sit up in his bed as she approached. His body still shook, but he managed. He knew this kunoichi, after all—Tsunade’s apprentice and Naruto’s teammate. A young, powerful thing with an intellect that rivaled the strength of her fists.

“This must be a special day,” Obito murmured, sounding more like a rusty nail on pavement than anything even remotely human. “Haruno Sakura, yes?”

Her pink eyebrows lowered a fraction. “That’s right,” she allowed. It was hard to imagine that she was only seventeen. “And it is a special day for you, I suppose. One final physical this morning, then we’re getting you out to stand trial this afternoon.”

She smiled then, and it was a small, bitter thing.

Right as the words sank in, right as Obito felt that same sick frisson of glee—because if there was to be a trial, there’d have to be a sentencing—he noticed that Sakura hadn’t come alone. Standing quietly in the doorway, watching with a strangely impassive face, stood Uzumaki Naruto. And behind him, clearly too addled to leave well enough alone, was Kakashi. Just looking at him. Hands a little too loose by his sides.

Obito smiled a little, feeling strangely triumphant, and lay back against the sheets as the young medic began her exam.

As Haruno had said, the trial began that afternoon. Once she’d signed off on his discharge papers, ANBU guards rushed in. A simple black robe was thrown over Obito’s hospital gown, and a blindfold slipped over his eyes. Obito had to laugh at this: they’d taken his Sharingan, his Rinnegan—what did they expect he could see?

He was handcuffed and sat into a wheelchair. He supposed it was telling that he sank into the seat almost gratefully. He’d thought that they were going to make him walk. He probably wouldn’t have made it to the door.

As it was, they wheeled him out of the hospital. Obito noticed the change in the air, how cold and
fresh it was, how the afternoon sun pierced his blindfold. Even in total darkness, slivers of light broke through. Under the blindfold, Obito rolled his eyes and sneered.

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He was wheeled along in silence (save for the occasional expletive or projectile from an onlooking villager) until they arrived at the courthouse. Again the air changed, went still. The light dimmed to dark once more.

Obito’s blindfold was removed and he looked around at a somber assembly. He supposed he was grateful not to have to endure a public spectacle before his execution. There were relatively few people in attendance: the Hokage herself, of course, the go-ikenban council consisting of Mitokado Homura and Utatane Koharu, and about twenty jounin. Naturally, Obito recognized Kakashi, who hovered at the fringes of the group, but also Gai, Kurenai, and a man who very closely resembled Senju Hashirama—or a Zetsu with human colouring, “Yamato”. Obito had only really ever thought of him as root fertilizer.

They dumped him into a seat in front of Tsunade, the go-ikenban, and a ninja in ghostly white robes wearing a neutral clay mask. This was the tribunal, he realized, meant to represent impartiality by the blank features, as well as finality, being clad in funeral white.

Tsunade held up a hand, and the assembly sank to its knees as one.

“Uchiha Obito,” the tribunal intoned with an androgynous voice, “You stand accused of grand conspiracy, treason, and sixty-five counts of crimes against humanity. How do you plead?”

“Guilty,” Obito rasped, as strong and clear as he could. His skin itched with the attention of so many eyes. The stocks, the gallows, the sword—any end would be a welcome one. He was ready. He was beyond ready.

“Then we are here to decide your fate. You’ve betrayed your village, threatened all humankind. Let me be perfectly clear; the public opinion is that you deserve death. That you deserve to suffer and to die for all you selfish actions have cost us. In this court, however, we will give due process. We will consider only the facts and deliver our verdict accordingly.”

The tribunal went on to list Obito’s transgressions, and Obito had to smirk again; they hadn’t amassed even half of his sins. The audience, though a disciplined crowd, tensed more and more with every charge. There was fury and hate simmering in the air. Obito drank it in. Hatred brought results; life had certainly taught him that.

Then it began to really fall apart.

Naruto intervened. “What does it say about us if we condemn him to die? He’s done terrible things—and, look, I should know; he’s the reason my parents are dead, the reason I’m a jinchuuriki. Even so, I’m not sure I can call the guy evil. He’s not in his right mind. Under all this, I know it’s not as simple as ‘he’s a bad man, kill him’.” He looked around at everyone present, daring them to say otherwise. “We’re supposed to be better now. There’ll be growing pains and stuff, but I think Konoha can set a great example of what shinobi can be after the war!”

“By giving amnesty to one of the instigators of that very same war?” This was Utatane Koharu, and her voice was as unwavering as her body was stooped and frail. “That’s a fool’s bargain. We’d look weak for sparing him, and we’d be even more foolish to consider allowing him within our midst.”

Tsunade spoke up then. “He’s frail and his abilities are curtailed. He’s no longer what I’d consider a
threat. And yet our prisons are tapped for resources. We can’t house him a moment longer.” She looked out at the assembled jounin, eyes reading carefully contained frustration. “And Naruto has a point. We’re dealing with probable brain damage, delusions, psychosis—he’s a monster, but a very broken one.”

“But—”

“We could house him—I could—” And this was Kakashi, speaking out of turn and drawing the attention of the room to him. Obito wasn’t the only one glaring his way. The room was silent a long moment, before erupting in agitated whispers.

“And I’m sure you have perfect objectivity in the matter?” Mitokado Homura inquired with audible disdain.

Kakashi’s rebuttal was swift. “I’ll step down if there’s anyone of you here who thinks you could handle him better than me. I’m his other eye. His former teammate. If he’s anyone’s responsibility, he is mine. Why should you risk someone else getting killed needlessly?” Obito wondered if anyone else could hear the strange, almost desperate tone beneath the surface.

“Who’s to say he hasn’t already compromised you? It’s no secret your pasts were heavily intertwined. And all that time in the prison with him…” and this was a bird-masked ANBU chiming in from the rafters.

Kakashi cut him off, and his voice was gratingly level as he told them, “Killing him would be giving him exactly what he wants.”

Obito fumed. If only he’d been sensible back inside Kamui and just killed Kakashi as he’d been itching to do, he could have met his end on the battlefield, quickly and simply, rather than dragging this farce of an existence out ad nauseam. He could hardly argue against Naruto’s claims—not that he’d even been invited to speak in his own defense. He couldn’t say a thing without supporting their claim of madness. And maybe he was mad, more than a little, for thinking he could have fixed this world. It was beyond help.

The tribunal handed the verdict to Tsunade, and Obito saw her close her eyes a fraction too long before she read it out. It was enough to make him tense in dread. Then the words left her lips and Obito abandoned all pretense of composure. He lurched unsteadily to his feet and started screaming obscenities at the top of his lungs.

The trial ended with Obito lurching over the bench in rage, cursing at any that would hear him until he was pulled back into his seat. He was bound quickly in leather straps, and crudely gagged until defeat and fatigue forced him into silence.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Home, sweet home.

Obito dreamed of summer.

Far from the mad tempestuous stress of his waking mind, and just as far from the blustery dying autumn outside, he drifted on the sun-warm Nakano River. Trees rose high overhead, stretching toward the sun and segmenting the sky. He could hear insects buzzing, the splash of koi fish, the nagging of ducks. The water lapped at his body, buoying him along like driftwood. He’d flow down to the ocean, breathe in the warm salt air and never look back.

His eyes opened to the dim closeness of Kakashi’s living room. He wished he had it in him to register disappointment, but by now he’d become accustomed to the pattern of his life’s stepwise decline. He gave the sparse room a blank, dispassionate stare. There was a claustrophobic pressure to the air at all times—Kakashi had triple-warded the triple wards. Even the oxygen seemed trapped within the walls of the apartment. The day he was first dragged here, while he still had the will to rail and fight, he’d been flanked on all sides by four ANBU guards, guards who were now posted in hidden locations inside and outside the apartment, ostensibly as ‘backup’ for his primary jailer. He thought for a moment that he ought to be flattered. Even emaciated, underpowered and nearly bald, he had Konoha on high alert.

He slept the bulk of his days away, curled under a blanket that had absorbed the sickly smell of his body. Left to his own devices, he would lie there and rot, wait for his kidneys to fail or for dehydration to take him. He felt every fluctuation of temperature; even when the room was stagnant and humid, his destroyed body felt cold. This was no life. This was no life, and yet death lingered so tantalizingly out of reach.

He was made to eat, monitored by Kakashi’s weary, steady stare that would not abate until he swallowed. The house was bare of sharp objects, of long rope and even household cleaners. Obito existed between the couch (which had begun to bend around his form and swallow him up) and the bathroom, which had become a source of regular humiliation for him.

He wasn’t to be trusted alone, and he was regularly marched to the bathroom to relieve himself or bathe, all under Kakashi’s supervision. Now was one such time, it seemed. As Obito’s eyes focused sluggishly on the world around him, they settled reluctantly on his jailer, who waited expectantly.

“Bathtime,” Kakashi said brusquely.

Obito sneered at him, but made no effort to move. He knew the drill—it wasn’t a matter of opposing wills. This was an inevitability. All he was able to do was make it a little bit more difficult.

Kakashi merely sighed, hauling him to his weak and trembling feet by force. Obito was frogmarched down the short hallway to Kakashi’s bathroom and directly into the tub.

“My odour displeasing to you?” Obito rasped, mocking.
That got him little more than a tired jut of the chin. “Strip,” Kakashi said, “or I’ll turn the water on anyhow.” Obito wasn’t given the dignity of a shower curtain, but then again concept of dignity had long since fled Obito’s life. Obito shrugged his simple black robe off and turned the lukewarm water on. He wanted nothing more than to be able to stand confidently, but he was weak. He was weak and diminished and his shoulders seemed to cave in of their own accord.

His skin crawled with Kakashi’s eyes on him, at the feeling of having his mangled, emaciated body bared. It was too much all over again, the bile surging up into his throat and the blood in him screaming for an end. There was an hysteria in him, some last ditch energy still fighting to escape. Half blind and more than half mad, Obito lunged for the shampoo bottle with grasping bony fingers and tore the cap off. He put it to his lips and began to drink.

Kakashi’s hands were on Obito before he could swallow another gulp, pressing down behind his mandible to make the act of moving at all quite painful. “It won’t kill you, idiot,” Kakashi snapped as he wrenched the bottle from Obito’s hands, “drinking that is only going to make things more painful for you over the next couple of hours.”

Obito seized up at Kakashi’s touch, disgusted by his mere presence. His gut twisted, clenching and preparing for the inevitable. He gagged. Kakashi exerted enough pressure on his jaw that Obito’s eyes began to water, burning salty against the tepid feel of the shower water. He was on fire from the inside out, frail muscles clenching to expel the thick swallows of shampoo. Vile, fruity soapiness, a taste so acrid it burned all the way to his nostrils, burst from his clenched teeth and ran from his lips. He couldn’t keep it in.

His stomach seized convulsively as he flinched away from Kakashi’s traitorous grip. He turned only enough to vomit into the tub in a violent torrent, one that knocked him off his feet and to the shower floor. There was a splash and the squeal of skin as he tumbled to the ground and continued to heave. His entire body bent with it, suds and bile searing at his throat and nose.

“How about—you go—fuck yourself instead!?” Obito gasped, shuddering on his knees, slipping against the porcelain and tile. His abdomen felt like it was in knots, burning and twisting, giving the tempting sensation of a fatal wound, though it was clearly anything but. His body betrayed him yet again, leaving him quaking at Kakashi’s feet in lieu of a more compassionate end. It always seemed like he could be brought no lower, and yet every single time he was proven wrong.

He trembled under the relentless rush of the shower, wrist-deep in water tainted with suds and his own sick. He might have wished for an end, wished for it with what little he still had left, but, like the water in the sluggishly flowing drain, absolution continued to spiral lazily away. He was doomed to purgatory, shackled to a reality he’d just as soon destroy.

He rested a cheek listlessly against the tiled wall, his body giving a petulant dry heave even as the drain gurgled, even as he felt the hesitant brush of a wet, soap-laden cloth at his back.

Water fell all around him, but he found he could not cry.
It did not take long for the tension to build up within the confines of Kakashi’s reinforced walls.

Time passed, and Obito had grown stronger.

Against his will he had been made to eat, and with eating came the slow, gradual sort of healing that his body hadn’t done in decades. His hair began to grow in again, wispy at first, then quickly full and black as ink once more. He took up more space in his clothes, looked less the wizened old man or the wan sickly child now. He was nowhere approaching robust, still far less sturdy and powerful than he’d been just a few months prior, but there was substance to him again where he’d become nearly translucent before.

Now he slept, he ate, was forced to perform ablutions… and he had taken to pacing. Now that he could comfortably stand, he stalked the perimeter of the living room like a restless jungle cat, baleful and hungry, silent yet agitated.

He imagined himself stalking Kakashi like prey, saw him as a fellow apex predator that had turned up lame, all but begging to be put out of his misery.

Another turn on the tatami mats. Another lap around the coffee table.

Another.

Another.

The monster deep inside Obito—the dark passenger that had slaughtered hundreds and orchestrated the deaths of thousands—was beginning to stir. He watched Kakashi wherever he went, eyes trained on him like daggers. He studied Kakashi’s walk, all the forced nonchalance of his posture, the tension barely contained underneath.

Even after all this time, even now with his eyes only suited to the mundane task of basic vision, Obito had an easier time seeing Kakashi than most. He saw a castle crumbling, a lone wolf with a mangled leg.

In those first long weeks, Kakashi had not left the apartment often, barely even allowing Obito out of his sight any more than was strictly necessary. Once Obito had regained some strength, though, once he had laid the unrelenting weight of his gaze upon Kakashi without mercy… Kakashi had begun to retreat into his bedroom in the evenings, shutting himself in as though trying to hide.

Sometimes it felt like they were both prisoners. What a sad masochist Kakashi was.

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A day of horrid contemplation came a short time later.

Kakashi finally had to leave for a half-day. Obito could see the first flakes of snow swirling on the air through the window that morning, the light from outside periodically interrupted by the shadow cast by Kakashi’s affected pacing. His near-paranoid re-casting of additional seals at strategic points in the apartment was enough to trap the very air and make the cool rooms feel somehow stifling.

Obito suppressed a shudder; it was as if the walls were pressing in on him from all sides. It was just a matter of time until they blotted out the last of the light and—

Stop it. Breathe.
It was apparently not enough to know there were ANBU surrounding the apartment at all times. Obito examined the configuration of the seals and had to wonder: was Kakashi only trying to keep him in? Or was there an attempt, under it all, to also keep the rest of the world world out?

This idea took root in him as Kakashi finally left for the day. It bloomed and began to bear a rancid fruit–Obito decided that if he must suffer, then so must Kakashi. It was time to play on those hints of darkness–the shadows that clung to Kakashi like hungry ghosts.

By afternoon when the Jounin returned, the slouch of his stance seemed heavier than before, as though his body were laden with the weight of the world itself. Obito hoped that it was dragging him down. Hoped it was crushing him.

He’d seen the cracks now, rifts in Kakashi’s armour wide enough to wedge his fingers into. He had uncovered inroads, if he only had the sense to look, clear paths into the twisted, grasping heart at the core of the man. At that very center, Obito could feel, was another means to his end.

He would die at Kakashi’s hands yet. He had only to be patient. Like water eroding rock–or acid eroding metal–he’d break him. There was something gratifying, Obito felt, in knowing that his death would now drag Kakashi down with him–destroy him and bring him to dishonour.

“You haven’t eaten in a while,” Kakashi observed from across the room, and like magnets Obito’s eyes honed in on his form, a gaze so intent it’d have skewered a lesser man. Kakashi hovered by the kitchen alcove, glancing at him in a sidelong fashion. Obito said nothing, but felt his rage swell anew–why the caring farce? Why the prolonged charade?

Kakashi moved around the kitchen efficiently, and before long Obito caught the (still faintly nauseating) scent of simple, healthy food; a fairly large cut of fatty fish, some rice and pickled vegetables–dressed-up peasant food, really, but it was what his stomach could tolerate. They’d learned that much the hard way. It was a thoughtful dish, made for a convalescent man; protein to salvage his muscle and immunity, carbohydrate for immediate energy, fat for longer-term energy, set in careful ratio to one another to help his body recover.

Far too much consideration for a man who still meant to die.

Obito watched Kakashi’s hands, the deft way he handled a knife and the much clumsier way he moved with spatulas and spoons. Those killing hands would never be meant for gentle tasks. Kakashi seemed to linger in the kitchen longer that was strictly necessary, checking and re-checking the rice, apparently intent on his task and yet seeming supremely distracted. Even after all was prepared, there was a moment of visible hesitation before he approached Obito’s couch (because it had become his over these last weeks, hadn’t it?) with the bowl of food.

“Here,” Kakashi urged, his voice kept so carefully flat. He’d picked up some fish between two chopsticks, waved the still-sizzling flesh near Obito’s face as he’d been doing since this unlikely imprisonment had begun.

The monster stretched its jaws suddenly, bared all its teeth and razor-sharp edges. Its will inhabited Obito’s left arm for a fraction of a second; time enough to slap the bowl away with a ringing impact. Rice spattered on the floor and walls in an instant; the bowl itself shattered against the doorknob. The fish, the pickles, lay ruined on the ground.

The explosion of strength left Obito breathless, his breathing clearly audible in the silence that followed.

Kakashi’s visible eye was wide, and it remained that way a moment. Obito wasn’t sure what he saw
there; it could have been hurt, outrage, or shock—or some exquisite combination of the three. Rather
satisfying. For that moment, even the masked Jounin couldn’t muster up a lie to hide his true self
away..

Kakashi withdrew his outstretched hand as though burned, eyes still sparkling with unvoiced emotion
he tried and failed to conceal. He looked tired. He looked lost.

“Pathetic,” Obito hissed, his heart still drumming a little too fast, his lungs still betraying their want
for air, “What do you think you’re doing? You’re Konoha’s pet dog—and what am I? Your project?
Your penance?” A laugh bubbled up in him, harsh and rasping. “You wanted me here with you,
didn’t you? Couldn’t leave well enough alone. Well, you’ve got me.” He leaned forward, bracing
his elbows on his knees, and stared Kakashi down. He’d give Kakashi no reprieve. There would be
no escape. The smile that lingered on his face just then was one of pure hatred—only white teeth and
black spite.

He reached out with an arm and swept a vase off the coffee table. The thing was made of cheap
plastic and did not break, but water and cut stalks spread across the floor, the moisture of it soaking
into the tatami like blood.

The monster inside him lumbered to its feet and stretched; awake now, wide awake and bloodthirsty.
Obito flexed his hand, which still stung a little from the strike, and found that he relished the burn.
He looked back at Kakashi and tilted his head. Felt a tiny bit victorious. “What will you do now?”

“You’re a prisoner, Uchiha,” Kakashi said through grit teeth. “Nothing more.”

“Prisoner that you hand-feed? That you bathe?” Obito goaded, still panting, his heart still
hammering in his chest from the mild exertion. “You’re clinging to me with such desperation—as if
that will absolve you somehow. I’d laugh if it weren’t so sad.”

Kakashi said nothing further, but he betrayed himself in the fitful flex-and-clench of his fist, the tense
jut of his jaw. He looked around the room, glaring at nothing for a moment, then he got up abruptly
and made for his bedroom. Obito heard the door slide shut, followed by the click of a lock. Obito
smiled.

He was not fed that afternoon, nor the morning after.

Later in the afternoon, however, in an apparent effort to prove a point, Kakashi did return, eyes
steely, hands laden with a simple bowl of rice. Obito complied and ate, teeth closing savagely against
the wood of the chopsticks. His eyes stayed fixed on Kakashi’s, pinning them as Kakashi’s gaze
darted about in fits and starts, making contact for brief defiant moments before shifting away again.
Some great conflict was brewing in there, frustration and uncertainty.
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Kakashi reaches the end of his endurance.

Obito imagined himself as an artist, though he now chiseled away at his masterpiece in the dark—without any sure idea what it would manifest as in the end.

He chipped away at Kakashi this way for a week, a leopard gnawing on stubborn bones. He was there, baleful and poisonous, the moment Kakashi entered the apartment. He heard the footsteps outside begin to slow with reluctance whenever they approached. He saw the shadows grow like dark smudges under that lone visible eye with every insult, each flare of defiance, relished in the tension that crept between his shoulders. The day was coming. He could all but taste it.

He found himself eager, imagining Kakashi’s broken expression when he finally succumbed and did what was natural—what he was trained to do. Obito wanted to see Kakashi finally understand that he would only ever be good for killing, that he was trash, a monster unworthy of the air he breathed. With everything in him, he hoped that would be the last sight he ever saw in this wretched existence.

The day came.

The air was of a different sort this evening. It lacked the lightness of the encroaching winter’s cold; it was heavy, weighted, thrumming with potential energy and coiled like a loaded spring. Obito was restless in his skin as he paced the apartment floor. Just beneath the surface of him a wild thing writhed, all scales and feathers and fangs, and like had begun to call to like. It sensed its kin nearby, buried deep under denial and delusion, and would not rest until it stood revealed, opposed and equal, until they could both bare their teeth and see whose were sharpest.

He wasn’t certain how he knew that today was to be the day, but as the setting sun drew bands of blood-red along the tatami flooring, it became a truth, absolute. Like the fury within him turned to liquid, oozing through him, coating his entire existence. Red and black—blazing rage and dark, fathomless hatred. He’d escape this world today or not at all.

He could sense Kakashi’s approach, all the weary-wary tension of him, the mad frustration that shoved at his seams. Obito’s blood quickened in answer. Tides were turning. A change was coming. The red of the sun dipped just below Konoha’s skyline, and long shadows clawed along the walls.

It was a good day to die, Obito reflected. As good a day as any.

He heard the faint, reluctant steps in the hallway, felt the pressured confusion that tainted the chakra approaching the door. Obito strode closer, eyes fixed on the doorframe like he could see beyond it, like he could see the end of his miserable purgatory making its way toward him. He smiled.

Kakashi was late to return, but perhaps for this he was right on time. Obito was glad he’d gained some strength back. If it was to end in blood, he’d need to shatter Kakashi’s last defenses by force.

“Good evening,” Obito greeted as Kakashi made his entrance, bowed and tired and obviously fighting to look anything but. “Who have you failed today, Kakashi? It must be exhausting—so many
people to disappoint, so little time.”

“Good to see you’re so talkative today,” Kakashi affected his usual disinterested drawl, but it betrayed itself with tension, with tiredness. “Try shutting up for a while.”

Obito became as single-minded as a shark that had scented blood. Kakashi was cracked and crumbling, leaving pieces of his precious armour in chunks on the apartment floor. He bent off course as Obito crowded him, the lauded soldier turned avoidant at the prospect of confrontation, so desperate to get away.

Where could he go? Obito was determined to be everywhere, to corner Kakashi at every turn. There was only one path they could follow, only one possible end ahead for them. Death would find them both.

“Oh no,” Obito hissed, voice crackling like water dropped in hot oil, “No, I don’t think I will. You chose this. You did this. What I’m doing now? That’s reaction.” He said this last with a full-body forward surge, hand slapping the wall loud enough to echo through the apartment. Kakashi jumped, just a little, and Obito saw his stance shift. It was automatic, fight and flight in the same tense, abortive motion.

Good.

“You natural disaster,” Obito sneered, tilting his head to further invade Kakashi’s precious personal space. “You cancerous fucking tumour. You poison everything you touch, and on top of that you’re so much of a coward that you can’t clean up your own messes–can’t seem to do what’s necessary.”

Kakashi made a pressed sound behind his mask; tight, sharp, fracturing noise. He feinted right, and Obito shifted left to match him.

Obito felt a little lightheaded. His vision swam, but he blinked it back. The rage in him was a living thing now, far stronger than the weakness of his body. This close, Kakashi couldn’t evade him—and (his memory stealing back to Rin’s cold, clotting blood, to the godlike power that had been his so briefly, to the fractured shale and razor shards of his shattered, foolish dreams, to fish and rice and ceramic pieces strewn across the floor) he lashed out sharply, viper-fast.

His open palm connected with the side of Kakashi’s face, all the disgust and the spite in his blackened heart concentrated into the blow.

The sound of the slap rang throughout the room. Kakashi stumbled, lost his footing and fell. He was reeling and stunned for a second, likely more from sheer surprise than any great amount of pain. Obito heard him take one shaky breath, and then another. “That’s enough,” he said harshly, and Obito could swear there was a growl that rumbled beneath Kakashi’s habitual baritone. The Copy-Ninja’s hands balled into fists before he remembered himself and shook them open once more.

He was trying. It was brave of him, Obito supposed.

“Mm, no,” Obito disagreed again, smile spreading wider as the thrill and the madness truly began to take hold. “It’s not enough, Kakashi. Not by half.”

Kakashi took a long time to get to his feet after Obito struck him, but when he did, the frayed, grasping anger wafted from him like a stench. As he watched him, Obito could see an echo of the monster he knew all too well, and it paced and bristled inside a self-imposed cage.

“Just admit it. Admit to yourself that you’re a failure—you failed to keep your promises, failed to uphold any of the faith I foolishly placed in you,” Obito snarled, and his voice got louder with every
word. There was fog playing at the edge of his consciousness, but his focus was absolute, his purpose now beautifully clear.

“And you know, Kakashi… much as I hate you, I can’t blame you, can I? What can a dog do but what it’s told, after all? I blame the system we were raised in. I think you should know that. What does it say about we ninja that our livelihood thrives on getting children killed? And our leaders? What does it tell you about Minato-sensei, that he failed and failed and failed; failed me, failed Rin? Couldn’t even stay alive for his own son.”

There was another terrible flinch that ran through Kakashi, and Obito knew he’d hit paydirt. He’d cut deep; all that now remained was to twist the knife.

“You killed him,” Kakashi said, so softly it was barely audible. It was a hiss under incredible pressure.

“It’s like he gave up,” Obito went on, rushing into the last of Kakashi’s carefully kept distance, “he always was good at abandoning his charges when they needed him most.”

Kakashi’s whole being was crackling with potential energy. Obito envisioned a dam, riddled with rapidly growing cracks. He could all but hear the roar of the river behind it with unfettered destruction on the verge of bursting through.

" You killed him ,” Kakashi repeated, louder, and the damning phrase resonated through Obito’s body, drawing an even wider smile out of him. And while it was only true indirectly, it was true enough to Kakashi. How hard it must be for him, Obito mused, to be confronted with an idol and an enemy all at once.

Obito grinned, running his tongue over his teeth. He barely restrained the urge to pat Kakashi condescendingly on the cheek. “And I’d do it again,” he told his captor. There was dark laughter in his voice now, the monster in him hissing more, just a little bit more. The sun dipped beneath Konoha’s skyline, the blood red light guttering into sudden indigo. The inky shadows grew behind them both, merging together across the darkness. With absolute certainty of purpose, Obito drew deep of the evil that continued to fester at his core. He would see Kakashi buried beneath that same awful miasma as his final act. They’d go down together.

“I’d gut him live while you watched, Kakashi,” he rasped then, lips curling like a snarling panther. “I’d tear the innards out of his darling wife, kill the baby right out of her before it so much as took its first breath—and I wouldn’t so much as flinch.”

“--SHUT UP!”

The noise Kakashi made was one akin to a feral dog: deep, guttural, and jagged as though he had gone years without speaking. Kakashi moved in a flash, tearing the navy blue mask from his face with sudden, unbridled rage. Obito barely registered the suddenly revealed face, the glint of shockingly sharp teeth.

“SHUT UP!! SHUT THE FUCK UP!!”

The air was knocked out of Obito’s lungs with concussive force. It was only his training, his innate knowledge of how to absorb a blow, that protected him from a stunned diaphragm—or a collapsed trachea; Kakashi’s forearm was pressed hard against his throat now, pinning him against the wall and heightening his breathless delirium. A naked face, naked emotion. Perfect—this was going perfectly.

Some smirkingly proud part of Obito looked upon its handiwork and purred. We stand monster to
monster at last, Kakashi, it whispered, and my, what sharp teeth you have. He understood the shiver a prey animal felt, suddenly staring down the muzzle of a slavering canine, all white fangs and wicked points. But he was no prey. He intended to roar back just as hard.

If the ANBU guards were supposed to be watching over them, they were doing an abysmal job of it. It was abundantly clear from their inaction that they stood on guard solely for Kakashi’s benefit. With Kakashi having the advantage at present—the visible one, at the least—nobody would intervene. They probably hoped for Obito’s death just as much as the other villagers.

It was right that this would be a private affair, Obito thought, even as another wave of adrenaline washed over him. Finally past the brink of reason, Kakashi was now ready to utterly destroy him in an instant, if need be. There was a savage sort of beauty in that that Obito wanted all to himself.

Kakashi’s breath was uneven and hot against his face, the Jounin’s mismatched eyes blazing with a desperate sort of fury, searching, accusing. And his face … Belatedly, Obito noticed that his own robe had come partly undone in the scuffle, now slipping entirely off of one shoulder. In this weaker state, he should have felt the autumn’s cold on his skin in an instant, but instead everything—the very air itself—was suffused with a violent sort of warmth that crackled with energy. He could smell ozone. The fine hairs on his natural arm stood on end.

Magnificent.

Sound forced its way past the immense pressure on Obito’s throat, rose in spite of the snarling, unhinged mess that had, once, been Hatake Kakashi. Body running hot now, everything teetering on the brink of some great precipice, Obito began to laugh.

“Just try to make me.”

Give me my death.
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Lines are crossed. Things become infinitely more complicated. Kakashi is not a vampire.

Obito registered the jarring impact. Then the light. Then the sound. Then the heat. Kakashi’s arm punched deep into the wall beside his head, glowing and screeching with electrical energy. The wall right by his temple burned and buckled and that blue-white crackling energy. The roar of the Jounin’s voice drowned under the impact of his chakra-laden fist, the lightning chakra shrieking and the sound of the strike itself reverberating in Obito’s very bones like thunder.

The intensity of the outburst stunned him to speechlessness; it was like being doused with ice-water, an abrupt jolt that arrests all movement, arrests all thought. Kakashi was scarcely human in his rage, a great awful creature that, for a slice of time, left Obito feeling small and naked in comparison.

That feeling was brief, there for a second and gone the next. The thing that bloomed in its wake was an utterly new sensation; it was a heady, strange kind of heat that sank into his bones, roared to life low in his belly and rippled out into his limbs. It felt like, like–

Kakashi’s hand was almost fully embedded into the wall scant millimeters from Obito’s ear. From that crater, the scent of gunpowder and scorched blood rose sharply, emanating from the disrupted containment seals. Residual electricity danced across Obito’s cheek in pinpricks, stinging, tingling. His pupils constricted against the light, then immediately with the adrenaline, dilated; the darkness becoming bright, the brilliance of the Raikiri becoming blinding.

So many have seen this exact thing just before they died.

It was a raw feeling, stripped down and fundamentally biological. Intensely, horribly, alive.

The heat had become a living thing in Obito’s cheeks now, warming his throat like the first kiss of fire. Kakashi was violence made flesh, in Obito’s space so near that his legs were forced apart to accommodate him. And the noise and thunder echoed, echoed with decades of repression, an underfed beast come raging to the fore.

“This is what you are,” Obito said harshly, swallowing with a grimace. “A killer. Trash. So do it, you fucking coward. Make me bleed.” Obito’s thighs tightened a fraction, a subtle discouragement against any thought of escape.

“Do it,” he said, imploring and commanding, asking for it as he had that day on the battlefield. The heat was nearly too much to bear, his pulse was throbbing with a mind of its own, oxygen suddenly in short, short supply. He wanted to wriggle out of his skin, leave it behind and become something utterly new. As it was, he could only tip his chin up, chase the elusive air with a thin breath that struggled, half-stolen by Kakashi’s razor-sharp panting maw. The specter of death was looming, dark and absolute, and Obito welcomed it. He could feel his pulse drumming in his ears—gut—even lower, and he felt the heat, now an inexorable inferno, slipping into him wherever Kakashi’s body touched his own.
Obito’s back arched on instinct—it would be like falling on a sword, simple and swift. Closer, closer.

– even dreams fall apart–

With a voice gone reedy form the punishing pressure on his windpipe, he rasped, “End it.”

“Shut the fuck up ,” Kakashi grunted, pressed so close with his lips curled back. Kakashi’s hips nudged closer between his legs, pinning him in place, flush up against him.

A fog had descended, steam billowing suddenly in a room that should have been cold with the oncoming winter. Instead it was pierced with a ragged gasp of surprise, one that transformed instantly into an open-mouthed snarl.

Obito’s mind was—

Where was—

He thought, deliriously, whoever heard of an Uchiha becoming overwhelmed by fire? Obito, you really are a dud. Because he was hot indeed—overheating—and made near-inarticulate with rage and embarrassment.

And pain; cramping pain that sank its teeth low in his core. He knew this pain, had known it since the rocks fell on him so many years ago. It had come on only rarely over the years, coaxed into halfhearted life by teenage curiosity, drawn nearly reluctantly to readiness by prostitutes determined to work for their money. It had, until now, been a sensation reserved for the scant and scattered experiences he’d had with women over his life. And it was worse than it had ever been in the past, alive and roiling on this night like the fire inside him, hotter with every rapid pulse of his heart.

The cramps should have been enough to diffuse the physical stalemate they were in, but his body held on, rode them out. His hips pushed back, curved forward, and like brushed like through the too-thin robe, through the rough military fabric. The air became a cacophony of stuttering breath, short sharp curses, and hands that gripped too tight.

“Ah—hh,” he hissed. He ached, and he was furious with himself for it.

His vision swam, his breathing coming harsh and constricted. And the pain ebbed, blooming into a purer kind of intensity. The kind a body chased without thought. Automatic. Abnormal —

A disgrace to the Uchiha clan, not fit to continue the line—

Makoto, you know he should have manifested already. He’s so late, he may never—

I won’t consider you my son. You’re not a ninja worthy of the name.

Oh Dad—if you could see your little disappointment now.

Kakashi shoved up against him like he was trying to punch him with his whole body. The entirety of him felt fistlike; the tight, coiled energy, the tension, the hardness (the hardness) driving Obito against the wall.

“SHUT UP ,” Kakashi bellowed, spittle flying and teeth flashing. “SHUT UP ,” he said over and over again, striking at anything but Obito’s face.

You’re doing it wrong , Obito wanted to say, his hands scratching furiously at Kakashi’s jaw, at his chest and immovable, brutal arm. I wanted you to kill me quick. Not this. I didn’t ask for this. His
legs squeezed against the hard bony angles of Kakashi’s hips. He wished he could say it was a matter of clinging to his aggressor, urging him in in an attempt to better invite his demise. But a smirking, self-hating part of himself was quick to chime in: death just didn’t move to the rhythm they’d fallen into. A death-hungry man didn’t feel a need like this in his groin, in the painful-staggering hardness that strained to strive forward and rub, and rock, and penetrate.

This was not at all what he’d wanted.

Yet his body refused to let go.

“Hit me,” Obito hissed, spite boiling through his teeth. He bucked violently, putting all his strength behind the movement, but Kakashi was immovable. “Kill me, you bastard, **COME ON !!!**”

He needed to yell with his full voice, to chastise Kakashi properly with all the bile he deserved. He needed that arm off his throat so he could bite back and snap back and punish him. It made sense, just then, in the fevered desperation of his mind, for Obito to reach down between their stubbornly entangled bodies. It made sense to bypass the warm column that was distorting Kakashi’s pants (**he wouldn’t think on it, he wouldn’t, the friction between them had to be some horrid trick**) and reach just below.

Through the blue fabric, beneath that hard insistent ridge, Obito felt the curve of Kakashi’s balls against his hand. Obito bared his teeth and growled, summoning a fury to match that of the animal that held him down. He squeezed.

The response was immediate; Kakashi grunted lowly and nudged into Obito’s grasp, shuddering as though that punishing grip shook him to his foundations. Kakashi’s forearm slipped from its bruising place against his throat, the hand falling down along his chest, spreading the edge of his robe open to the navel. The sudden rush of air should have felt sweet to his lungs, starved as they were for it. Instead it clawed and scraped its way down his throat, stoking the fire within as only oxygen can.

Obito cursed aloud, writhing—**get away, get closer, get away**—there was too much, he was too exposed, there was another man between his legs. There was a man, **Hatake Kakashi**, shoved against him, moving, **grinding**.

As though unsure where to put them, Kakashi bracketed his arms on either side of Obito’s body. One pressed to the wall over his shoulder, still grasping the burnt, broken edge of plaster around the hole. The other sat just beside Obito’s rolling hips, and Obito could feel the heat from it searing through the remainder of his clothing.

He looked briefly down between them and saw the sloppy connection of their pelvises, the disjointed bump and grind, the writhing rhythm that intensified and grew frantic. And he swallowed a knot of pure nausea; his legs stood out as a pale contrast against the dark of Kakashi’s pants. He witnessed, as though from outside his own body, as the muscle in those thighs strained and tightened, as they clutched against Kakashi’s fatigue-clad legs.

Kakashi ground forward and Obito’s hips jerked. His robe fell open further, and he was awash in contrast, cold air and hot bodily contact. The knot had slipped, and he hissed as fabric grazed flushed, sensitive skin. Hot and moist even through his pants now, Kakashi’s cock thrust against his, shoving up insistently, straining forward despite Obito’s too-hard grip on his sac. Obito shivered. He felt feverish, and he bit his lip to stifle the sound that was building up inside.

Kakashi leaned his head against the wall, breath falling warm and humid against Obito’s neck. The heat of it, the sound of it, made his cock fill and throb. He was tense and aching, rutting with his whole body like some wanton, breathing boiling heat into the cool air, feeling the same warmth
billowing from Kakashi’s lips.

And, oh, he craved it; a release to the tension, the sensation of flesh against flesh. It was all new, so new. What scant desire he may have felt in years prior was nothing compared to the grasping thing that now dragged at him. Furious with himself but helpless against the tide of this twisted need that held him in its thrall, Obito let his head fall back. One hand dug in to the blue fabric of Kakashi’s shirt, and the other—it explored of its own will, stroking up the solid column of Kakashi’s arousal, then down over both of theirs. As he did this, Obito shuddered, his abdomen tensing. His teeth released his lower lip and, nearly sobbing the noise, he moaned.

Obito felt himself losing.

He lost something the first time he cried out with more heat than rage. He chipped away at something critical every time he met Kakashi’s hips with his own.

He shouldn’t have shivered, shouldn’t have accommodated Kakashi’s hands as they delved beneath his robes to grasp his fevered skin. Blunt nails bit into his back and sides, clutched, desperate, against the straining of Obito’s thighs. He was given the briefest of moments’ reprieve as Kakashi fumbled aggressively with his fatigue pants, but that ended within the space of a quick breath. A small, remote part of him panicked, panicked to feel that hot, flushed cock push past his fingers and come sliding wetly against his own hardness. It was a sweet and devastating defeat, to tighten his grip around both organs, lock them together in a mutually destructive embrace. His body stiffened, breath coming faster and faster. There was still not enough air, but Obito found himself caring less and less.

Kakashi held him close, his grip and drive relentless. There was no escape.

The breath was hot on his neck, Kakashi’s mouth open and moist and panting, and Obito’s head tipped to the side, let him drag his lips there. Reckless, he allowed a flash of tongue, and felt it like sparks on his skin.

*What are you doing to me*, he wondered forlornly, gasping with a harsh noise. *What the hell have I become?* The long-sought shroud of death had ebbed away entirely, replaced with a heady, carnal throb that took them both over. Kakashi’s cock thrust against Obito’s palm, against Obito’s dick, dragging against flesh, flesh, flesh, and scenting the air between them with arousal.

Kakashi made a broken sound against his neck and the wet swipe of tongue at Obito’s neck suddenly yielded to sharp teeth. The first prick was like gasoline on the flames within, and as Kakashi broke the skin, Obito ignited. A moan ripped straight from his core and built into a hoarse scream.

“AAAAahmn--”

His back arched again, sparks danced in his vision, and he bled, leaned into that sharp, wicked pain and let it take him higher.

A strong pulse of wet heat coated his hand, suddenly easing their motion. Obito couldn’t tell if it had come from himself or from Kakashi, but it ran slickly between his fingers just the same, let him tighten his grip and intensify everything. They were climbing together, approaching a point of no return.

But why was—

Obito was losing –

There is an instinctive fear one feels when standing at the edge of a cliff. Nature floods us with
adrenaline, screaming without words that here lies death, here lies inescapable harm. All creatures shy back from that edge, feel the vertigo and nausea course through them at the steepness of the drop.

Obito’s stomach dropped as the sting of Kakashi’s bite ebbed, a stark realization cutting through that delirious haze. There would be no rock to end this fall. No water below to drown in. There was only a void, an interminable descent that was going to rip him apart, all that he’d come to be, until there was nothing left.

He hated. So much. He—

“Mmh, ohh…”

He could feel a thin trickle of blood trace his collarbone as it escaped the hot assault of Kakashi’s mouth, as it slipped past the lapping quickness of his tongue. It mixed into the sweat of his torso, mingled with the saliva on his skin. Obito’s legs trembled, fatiguing as they clung to Kakashi’s with frightening tenacity.

This was absurd. There was something poisonous blooming in his gut, a febrile disease that had now leached into every cell.

(He felt disgusting. He felt incredible.)

He didn’t recognize his own voice any longer, couldn’t pick it out amidst the strange animal sounds and half-bitten grunts that rose in the air between them, accented with the slick wet sound of their cocks moving against each other.

Kakashi moved impossibly closer, Kakashi who was all around him like a curse, like an anchor dragging him down, pulling him over the edge and to his doom.

What a horror, what a welcome relief he felt as Kakashi’s hand nudged his own failing one aside. A fumbling, grasping new hand took over the grip that inexorably brought their mutual ruination.

Maybe it was alright to give this up, Obito considered hazily. It was certainly less mortifying than doing it himself. Now he could let his eyes roll back, ride the wave of rising tension that drew his balls up tight and had his hips pistoning on automatic. He could let it happen to him.

Kakashi’s grip, rough with calluses, tightened convulsively. Their pace increased from frantic to desperate, and Obito felt the last of his resistance forcibly ripped away.

The orgasm hit him suddenly.

His vision flooded with white and the tinny ringing in his ears, the faint faded sounds of his own heart and his gasping voice, all vanished. He became blind. He became deaf. He was pure vibration; light and energy and shocking, terrible pleasure.

It could have been a whisper now—it could have been a scream. He didn’t know anymore. All he knew was the fire, the liquid heat, how it rushed through him and swallowed him whole. Helpless, Obito tumbled over the precipice and into the waiting jaws of the void.

He was paralyzed for an interminable moment, locked in a cycle of paroxysm and pleasure. His body quivered, and his neck burned where Kakashi’s mouth continued to bite fervently, bruising the already abused flesh. He shuddered against that relentless hand, crumbled in increments until he was mindless, insensate—less a man and more some base, automatic creature.
He came back to himself in segments. He first felt his body, parts of it still hot, aching with ebbing pulses of dissipating heat, then thought gradually caught up, initially a traitorous vague contentment that was chased away immediately by horror.

Their bodies disentangled with an audible sound, one that would have made Obito curl his lip in disgust had he not been busy quaking, boneless and confused, in the wake of their actions. Cold rushed between them as they parted, ripping the steaming warmth away as though with claws. And realization cut through the haze, realization more uncomfortable than the come that presently cooled, cold and sticky, on his thighs.

What had he just done?

What had they just done?

What followed was a wave of nausea so strong he could almost hear it, like a shrill ringing in his ears. His stomach clenched violently, but he couldn’t so much as retch. His legs finally failed him and he slid to the floor.

It took a long time, a painfully long time with Kakashi standing there in the gloom above him, looking just as lost as Obito felt. He looked ridiculous, softening cock sitting outside his undone pants like he’d forgotten what to do with it. His eyes were wide, his expression unreadable.

Obito watched Kakashi’s eyes flicker over his body, take in his robes all askew, his bare legs, the telltale stains. The bloody bite. He thought he heard his breath hitch.

Abruptly, like shutters being closed, Kakashi stilled completely. He turned his back on Obito in one sharp motion and stepped away down the hall.

Obito’s eyes stayed on him with a falcon’s sharpness, piercing like they could flay him apart and find an explanation just under the flesh.

There was a small scared part of of him that wanted to call out, say something—don’t leave me—where are you going?—all sorts of dangerous, foolish things.

But he remained silent, and with every slowing breath he felt himself ice over, felt that heated spark freeze over into keen, cruel anger.

He’d asked—begged—for death. He hadn’t asked for this, for fire and lust and this monstrous change that had erupted suddenly between them. He hadn’t asked for fangs to pierce his skin, nor for the mindless way his body had responded. He certainly hadn’t asked for the lingering laxity in his limbs that tried to soothe, even as he seethed.

Ten feet away, the door to Kakashi’s bedroom clicked shut, and the sound echoed through the darkened apartment.

Obito was cold. He was cold and disheveled and sick with confusion. He didn’t know what had happened, why this world had thrown him this mass of confusion when all he’d asked for was the void.
He knew only one thing. Neither of them would survive this. He would make sure of it.

Kakashi’s flak jacket lay forgotten on the floor, and an answer bloomed in Obito’s mind like a rotting flower.

Neck aching, he reached over to the jacket and flipped open the nearest utility pocket. He withdrew a single blade, meticulously sharpened by its owner, and slipped it into his sleeve. Obito returned to where he’d initially fallen and trained his livid stare on the wall opposite him to wait out the night.

He would have blood for this.
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

A murder attempt, a struggle, and the beginning of something inexorable. It may prove futile, but resistance is on the menu tonight.

CW for some internalized homophobia.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Every inch of him ached.

His muscles were wound tight, bunched and tired as he sat, hunched, against the wall in the wake of that alien, fevered exertion. He sat there in the small hours, sleepless, waiting as the dusk progressed slowly into a sickly pale sort of dawn.

Over and over, his thumb skirted over the point of the stolen blade, and he busied himself with imagining. He imagined Kakashi’s blood spilling over his fingers. He imagined himself standing over Kakashi’s dying body (he could hear his own breathing in his mind, fast and harshly drawn through bared teeth), saw his hand turn the wet blade inward, felt the thing slip between his ribs and pierce the rotting remains of his heart.

He still craved death, hated it for being so elusive—for being so damaging, always terrible in its absence. He should be dead. A million times over by now. No good came of living, only new monsters, new depths to sink to.

The creak of door hinges shattered his musing. Obito’s gaze cut sharply to Kakashi, who was exiting his bedroom. Their eyes met briefly—a fraction of a second—and fury flooded Obito again, a raging tempest just beneath statue-like stillness. Because Obito sat still. He sat quiet. He stared. He hated, and even after Kakashi averted his eyes, even after he crossed in front of Obito to retrieve his vest, Obito stared him down, imagining all the while that he could rip him to bloody chunks with invisible claws.

Kakashi left not long after, new mask fully in place, and silence reigned once more.

The day marched on, and Obito remained, wedged between the floor and the wall as though his inert body had grown roots. His fingers tightened against his knees. The fingernails dug in, burying into his skin. What was happening to him?! This was a violation, a debasement, far worse than anything he’d ever thought possible. Shackled with something far stronger than iron; shame. He’d played his part too, hadn’t he?

For the first time in a few weeks, to his utter devastation, he began to think of Rin. Obito clenched his jaw, nausea rushing through him in a wave. He felt that hollow ache in his chest that hurt like a heavy swallow of lye.

Are you watching me now, Rin? He shrunk inward at the thought. Look away. Please.
Was he to be used like this? Pawed at and ravished like some courtesan? Like the men and women that lined the back alleys of Konoha’s less than savoury quarters? Ahh, would he prove his father right after all? (*Fag* hissed in his mind with his father’s voice. *Queer.*)

The mark on his neck ached, swelling and throbbing and turning pink. Human bites were filthy things. With a little luck, infection might eventually kill him, though he’d rather die a quick death at the end of a knife than endure fever and organ failure. Hadn’t he already borne enough of Kakashi’s scars for a thousand thousand lifetimes?

Against his better judgement, Obito reached up to touch the bite, and he hissed at the intensity of the sting when his fingers made contact.

He deliberately ignored the lingering sense-memory of pleasure, traitorous pleasure that had flowed over him like wave after storm-tossed wave. It had washed him clear of his senses; turned him into some needy catamite, some caged wanton thing. He hadn’t wanted it. No matter what foul things his body had elected to do. He hadn’t wanted it.

There had been a time when he could have successfully shut it all away. Forgotten Obito the boy, forgotten what it was to feel.

He wasn’t that boy–he never would be again–but now, all he needed was that coldness. The crystalline detachment of being nothing and no-one.

He wasn’t that boy. But he was something.

Whatever it was, he hated it.

Afternoon set in, the daylight taking on a more golden cast as it crept in indifferent lines across the living room floor. Kakashi would return soon, and bring with him Obito’s last chance.

Slowly, painfully, he climbed to his feet and shook the chill from his bones. He was weak, and far slower than he had been at the height of his power. He felt it now, more than ever, the way he’d been so easily crushed against that wall. He would have to take Kakashi by surprise.

He stretched, testing muscle and sinew, making a few practiced slashes in the air.

He considered himself critically. Slow. He was so terribly slow these days. Kakashi would certainly take him in a fair fight. Obito’s slashes increased in intensity. He needed one precious second. Just time enough to rip into him.

He could do this. He could. He had to.

Then he felt that familiar, loathsome aura on the periphery of his consciousness (felt the phantom hand on his back and ass and legs and–). He stilled.

The door handle turned.

Kakashi entered.

Obito leaped.

As he closed the space between them, Obito saw the surprise in Kakashi’s lone eye turn to dark fury in an instant. “You--?!” Ah, and maybe some self-directed anger; when had Hatake Kakashi ever not checked his gear before a mission? And then, even angrier, “In my house ?!” He moved smoothly, as a ninja in top form is wont to do.
Obito wheezed involuntarily as he was slammed against the door.

He’d been too slow after all.

Defeat stung him sharply, but still not near as sharp as the sting of the acute bend of his wrists, gripped tight and wrenched in Kakashi’s—frustratingly—stronger grip.

“Right in your fucking house,” he spat, petty and raging. “Right where you live.” He kicked out as best he could, catching Kakashi close-range in the shins, which earned him a grunt and a snarl (and, oh, Obito remembered those vicious teeth).

He saw the fire spark in Kakashi’s entire countenance, saw an explosion swell behind closed doors. He was relentless, his lone eye dark with rage. He bent Obito’s wrist back, and the sudden pain of it made Obito gasp, involuntarily leaning into Kakashi’s space to lessen the pressure. Powerful thumbs jabbed between ulna and radius, killed Obito’s grip and made the kunai slip from suddenly nerveless fingers.

He’d been as powerful as a god once, he thought, crying out in pain and frustration.

Where was that now?

Two things happened at once: Kakashi deftly caught the kunai in his own hand, and in doing so Obito’s left hand came free, enough to catch Kakashi in the gut with a dirty suckerpunch. There was barely any force behind it; Kakashi absorbed the blow with only the slightest exhalation, already pivoting to counter him.

Obito bellowed in fury and threw his entire weight forward. Off balance—and still at the mercy of Kakashi’s iron grip—the pair of them stumbled across the living room. Obito felt a dull shock of pain as his thigh finally made hard contact with the arm of the couch. With their momentum absorbed, Kakashi regained his footing. In a flurry of movement, Obito found himself bent facedown over the couch, one arm pinned painfully behind his back, forcing him to arch, stilling only as he registered the heat and weight of Kakashi at his back.

The kunai bit suddenly into the skin of his throat.

Obito exhaled, shaky; their relative positioning now dawning on him, now filling him with sick dread.

Hips pressed against him from behind and, almost as if in answer, Kakashi’s angry, panting breath disturbed the hairs on the back of Obito’s neck.

“You want to kill me?!” Kakashi’s rage was back, as uncharacteristic and intense as it had been last night. “DO IT, THEN, OBITO. KILL ME.”

Oh, he would kill him if he could. It was all he wanted in that moment, death to put a stop to things.

Obito snarled, teeth baring to match what he imagined Kakashi looked like behind him—slavering and wild. The sound that ripped from his throat was scarcely human, much more the shrieks of a trapped predator, of a feral thing with fangs and claws forcibly kept at bay.

It wasn’t so long ago, he lamented, that none could lay a hand on him—he’d have slipped away, melted through matter like a living ghost. But the couch’s cheap upholstery was real and rough against his cheek, the arm of it just catching the tops of his thighs and pressing in.

And Kakashi was warm against his back, slotted against him like a jigsaw puzzle.
Fury flooded his body. He’d accomplished nothing, nothing but this debasing, subjugating position they had fallen into. Worse now, he was acutely aware of where this could lead. Before last night he never would have considered it, never would have imagined that decades of anger and bitterness would metamorphose into that carnal, blind form of lust. The awful words his father used—words for men who took pleasure from other men—blared in Obito’s mind like sirens.

His gorge rose.

He struggled against Kakashi’s iron grip and cursed, pettily, "Fuck you—fuck you—!!"

Death would be so much easier.

The answer was just there now. Just ahead of him on the edge of a blade, he could finally take his leave of this vile existence, open his throat like a slaughtered bull and just bleed and bleed and bleed—

Would it soak the sofa through, he wondered hysterically.

Would his blood leave a stain in Kakashi’s life, impossible to wash out?

Death, freedom, bit against his throat. He willed himself forward. Just a milimeter to break the skin. Blood rose into the wound immediately, running down his neck in a hot rivulet. The pain made him gasp, but it was only pain—and pain was nothing.

Just a little more. Just. Just that little bit more.

"FUCK—"

Though his entire being was tense, though his chin was lifted (the blood still coursing down the kunai, pooling where his collarbones met the couch seat), Obito couldn’t move.

He couldn’t take that final step.

He could feel Kakashi’s hipbones against his rear—and something else now, jutting ahead of those hipbones.

Obito let loose a string of expletives; unable to move forward, terrified to move backward.

He didn’t know who or what he was cursing any longer; Kakashi or the world or his body, wretched and accursed thing that it was, a body that was betraying him yet again, flooding him with undesirable desire.

"Do it."

Obito’s fingertips blanched as he gripped the couch tightly. His face felt flushed, reddened and throbbing with blood. He had no leverage in his legs; he was bent too far forward. He couldn’t rear back; Kakashi’s narrow frame pressed down on him as though it suddenly held a thousand times the weight. Obito was pinned in place. He was stuck.

His chakra simmered at a pathetically low level now, nearly as far from his grasp as the godlike power he had once held in his eyes. There was no jutsu to be called upon, no surge of strength to bring to bear. There wasn’t enough air for his sore, taxed body to breathe.

"FUCK YOU—" was all he could continue to say, like a petulant child, like some small trapped spitting thing. This was subjugation at its most extreme, a humiliating level of helplessness against
forces from both without and within.

He thought about death one last time: the definitive solution he’d managed to fail to reach. All that remained of that avenue was the rapidly drying, sticky patina of blood at his throat. A millimeter or two deeper, and it would have been over. Failure was becoming a theme of sorts.

Clearly, the cruel, wry voice in his head warned him, he had no clue what he actually wanted.

Case in point: Kakashi’s breath was hot on Obito’s nape again now, amazingly familiar to his body even though it had only been the once (once that never should have happened; a complete and utter aberration, deny at all costs). The sound and heat and weight sank into Obito’s bones immediately, wrapping insidious, invisible fingers around the thickening shaft between his legs. A subtle, shifting rhythm had begun to permeate their movements once more, instantly blurring the line between violent struggle and something altogether more dangerous.

He resisted. With every fraying edge of control he had, he thought wildly of any possibility of escape—not only from Kakashi’s damning grasp, but also from himself. From a body that seemed all too eager, all of a sudden, to play this mindless game.

He tensed, then relented, then tensed again. His clear, hyper-linear thoughts eroded into a maelstrom of desire and disgust. And he felt against him, growing firmer with every pressured, panting breath, the intentions of Kakashi’s body.

Obito wanted to touch himself.

“Do it,” Kakashi was snarling murderously, fury turning it into a mantra, and unknowingly giving Obito’s shameful drive a voice.

Obito hissed.

He would not.

Kakashi made a frustrated noise and took the kunai away from Obito’s throat. He flung it away across the room. It hit the wall with a heavy thunk that resonated through the room, even jarring Obito from the burning haze that had begun to settle over his mind. In that moment of awful clarity, he was able to take full stock of his situation. He could acknowledge, first and foremost, the low, full throb between his legs. He was hard again, hard as yesterday, and all it had taken this time was Hatake Kakashi bending him over a couch and pressing his similarly rigid cock against the crack of Obito’s ass.

They were still fully dressed, the two of them, Obito disturbing the line of his robes and Kakashi almost certainly aching (good, let him ache) in the confinement of his fatigue pants. A particularly aggressive forward push from Kakashi tumbled them both onto the softer cushioned seats, and the arm of the sofa no longer bit into Obito’s thighs. Kakashi was no longer holding him down per se; his arms penned in close on either side of Obito’s body. And somehow that made it worse, knowing that escape was possible if only he had the will. The restraint was gone, but Obito remained, fixed in place as though by invisible strings. Don’t give it to him—don’t give him the satisfaction—

Kakashi’s gasps bloomed hot on the skin of his neck, a coil of steam against raised gooseflesh. They sounded helpless somehow, just as hopelessly lost. And Obito’s rational mind became a dim echo, still shrieking RUN, but so far away, trapped now behind curtain after curtain of thick, all-consuming ardor.

They had assumed a rhythm again, a clothed approximation of a far deeper embrace. Obito groaned
then, low and frustrated, to realize that his mind had begun to extrapolate. To consider the rhythmic
twitch of his ass against the dry drag of Kakashi’s straining pants and wonder, really wonder, how it
might feel going in. Filling him from within. Stretching him until he couldn’t take any more.

The thought only made him throb harder, made that burning need raise its voice into a shriek.

Kakashi’s mouth dragged a hot line across the back of his neck, and Obito could hear a hitching
growl, this bitten-off “haaaaah” that made something low in his abdomen coil hotly.

Obito felt the brush of lips against the broken skin of his bite, and just like that the last of his restraint
turned away. He felt his face contort, felt his eyes burn with tears that would not shed. (He wasn’t a
boy any longer, after all. He would not offer up that last token of weakness.) Cheek pressed against
the couch—smearing with thickening blood, eyes pressed shut, he finally relented against his body’s
loud insistence.

Every time he thought he had reached his absolute nadir and could fall no lower, the ground seemed
to give way gamely beneath him, happy to drop him down even deeper. With one more frustrated
hiss through grit teeth, Obito let his hand drift between his own legs.

The relief he felt with that first stroke tasted so bitter in his mouth.

Where was his mind?

Where was the cold, calculating machine he’d developed to shield the aching void at his core from
seeing the light of day?

Obito scrambled for sense, for control. It would not come. His brain had fallen into a fevered mess,
disjointed thoughts crumbling against the tide of far more primitive instinct. The lips at his neck
again were sweet fire, and the steam and the drag of them made him shudder terribly, grind back
against Kakashi’s hardness like some wanton.

He didn’t know what he was doing.

He worked himself furiously, so fast and so hard that he hurt and felt pleasure in precisely equal
measure. No ache could compare to the shame that twisted his gut. He could hear himself moaning,
slowly he looked like nothing so much as a cat in heat, straining for whatever friction he could find
against his rear.

It didn’t take long at all to come like this. Whatever madness had struck Obito for a second time went
spilling out onto his hand in thick gouts. Kakashi was right behind him, literally and figuratively,
those heated breaths turning ragged and savage as he shuddered to his completion.

Obito had a few lukewarm moments to catch his breath before the haze fully lifted. As his eyes alit
on the knife now stuck deep into the opposite wall, he could only think, hysterically, how badly
he had failed to kill his quarry, for the first time in his life. Behind him, Kakashi had begun to stiffen
(everywhere but where he had previously been thus). They scrambled apart from each other, Obito
crouching at the far end of the couch, curling in on himself, and Kakashi stumbling back, chest
heaving, eyes wide. Obito saw the wet stain spreading into Kakashi’s pants and shuddered, revulsion
and hunger mingling confusingly in his stomach.

“Get the f*ck away from me!!” he hissed, hating the desperate turn his voice had taken. The couch
cushions were filthy with come, a white speckled line drawn between their bodies. Kakashi’s eyes
followed the line, finally falling on Obito’s face, looking stunned, stung, frightened. Obito cast
around for whatever he could reach—a plastic bowl in this case. It was a testament to Kakashi’s state
that he didn’t dodge the projectile at all, only flinching when it landed squarely between his eyes.

“GET AWAY!!”

Chapter End Notes

Updates are going to space out from here; I’ve blasted through much of the content that I’d pre-written. They may become a little irregular. There will be shorter chapter interludes as well, I think, where we can look at the situation through other characters' lenses. There are things going on in Konoha you just won't be able to get a good sense of from Obito's limited POV. Thanks for the patience, everyone, and for your support thus far! I work a pretty extensive full-time job, so bear with me.
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

An important question.

Who are you?

An Uchiha, a child of an ancient line, destined for greatness.

Are you?

A failure, dead-last, worst in class, loser, loser, loser, Daddy’s disappointment.

And?

It hurts, it hurts, why does it hurt? I can feel everything, every severed nerve, every broken bit of tissue. I don’t want to feel anything, I gave it up. I passed it on. It’s okay, isn’t it? Why can’t I go? Please, let me go--

What else?

“You're a tool. You have a singular purpose.”

I’m Uchiha Obito. I’ve awakened my Sharingan, I’ve survived the impossible, and I’m going to make it out of here and save my friends!

Are you?

I’m lost. I’m in hell.

He’s killed her.
Her heart is torn out, and mine goes along with it.

So, who are you?

Uchiha Madara. I’m building a dream that will override this wretched reality.

Who are you?

No one. I don’t want to be anyone.

Liar. Who are you?

A failure.

(a queer, some sissy faggot)

Who are you?

I have no fucking idea anymore.
“Get up. You smell.”

He looked up at the sound of Kakashi’s voice, despite himself. It caught him off guard, raw and unfamiliar-sounding after days of strained silence. The words were no surprise. Certainly, he was foul. Greasy. He hoped he was unbearable to Kakashi’s sensitive nose.

Kakashi hadn’t said a word to him nor spared him more than a glance in over a week. He certainly stayed out of the house as long as was possible, so much so that Obito had begun to notice items around the house moving or changing (the thermostat, for example) without his or Kakashi’s input. That served as just enough of a reminder to him that ANBU were staked out in and around the apartment. Entertained, no doubt, by the sordid turn of events. For what it was worth, Obito hoped they got an eyeful of their venerated Captain at his worst. Perhaps they’d already met to discuss the lapses in professional conduct, the now-blatant violation of prisoner-guard relations (if such a thing existed). Maybe they’d fire Kakashi and go back to their old plan of just killing Obito for his crimes.

One could dream.

Obito had accepted by now that he would not die by his own hand. The universe saw fit to deny him such an end, trading blades and blood for heat and sweat twice now. Who knew where continuing to test those limits might lead.

This torpor was not the inertia of a man who’d chosen to die. This was shock at its purest, the kind that follows those massive seismic shifts in one’s life. The dominant part of him was plainly surprised and discomfited by this revelation of a new facet of his sexuality (and Kakashi’s); two events negated the argument that that first time had been a fluke. Plainly, Obito did not know what to do. Rage and shame sat in him in equal measure, as well as a small glimmer he was choosing to block out with all energy remaining to him. A small part that was intrigued, clinging to this new development in his life as a welcome change in stimulus from his repetitive norm. He didn’t want to listen to that part.

Obito’s bones were stiff and uncooperative as he shifted, mindful of the stale sweat, blood, that stubborn cling of spent lust that just made him feel used. He shifted to turn his back on Kakashi, slowly and laboriously. He must have paused a moment too long, because strong hands gathered him beneath either arm and bodily hauled him off the couch.

He couldn’t quite suppress the unwanted frisson at the sudden contact, and he hated himself a little more for that.

Obito slid backward with Kakashi’s pull, inert, all fire and fight extinguished. His legs were weak under him, and his head hurt. Kakashi was as strong as Obito was not, and that grip was inexorable. He thought to curse Kakashi again, but what passed his dry lips was little more than a hoarse whisper, inaudible and voiceless. He could have tried again. He didn’t.

His face felt hot. He hated that, too.

He was all but dragged into the bathroom, just as he had been in his first days of imprisonment. As he crossed the threshold to the tiled floors, though, the realization hit him in a way that was altogether unfamiliar. He was going to be stripped bare in front of Kakashi again, in all his filthy, mangled, underfed glory.

And now Kakashi’s hands on his skin spoke a different narrative. Kakashi’s eyes on his body couldn’t
be detached and clinical now, if they ever had been in the first place. That hot breath he’d felt on his neck had been anything but detached. Obito feared those eyes on the entirety of his body. There was no shampoo bottle within reach, he noted almost giddily.

His reflection was visible in the mirror over the sink now. His hair was lank with grease and his jaw thickly peppered with stubble. There were hollow shadows under his eyes and cheeks, and his neck was still black with old blood. There had been an awful lot of it, hadn’t there? He swallowed thickly around a parched throat, pulling the filthy robe closer together with numb fingers. He was hyperaware of Kakashi’s presence, the suffocating nearness of it.

The worst of it was, he now trusted himself least of all. The bite mark still ached.

He wished Kakashi would leave.

Of course, he didn’t leave. Obito felt eyes lingering on the old bloody mess at the junction of his neck and shoulder, no doubt transfixed by their own handiwork on display.

The walls of Kakashi’s small bathroom felt closer than ever as Obito disrobed reluctantly, the be fouled cloth falling to the floor heavily, and far too quickly for his liking. The walls were close, and Kakashi’s presence weighed heavy as a result. Without trying, Obito could hear him breathing. He could hear the subtly quickened cadence of those breaths.

Despite the feigned nonchalance, Obito knew Kakashi’s eyes were on him. That awareness went beyond a ninja’s trained instincts, didn’t simply buzz in his brain briefly like the glance of any other. He felt this from the roots of his hair to the tips of his toes, and felt it strongly.

He tried to imagine those eyes anywhere but upon him. He tried to think of anything else.

“Here.” Kakashi handed him soap, a large, utilitarian bar of the stuff, with a confidence that angered Obito. Kakashi knew he wouldn’t try anything this time. He knew the fight was gone from him, that by now he had nothing left. His bloodied neck was testament enough to that. Kakashi perched on the edge of the sink, staring resolutely ahead at the opposite wall. “Now, hurry up.”

Obito stepped into the tub, skin still afire. His fingertips trembled faintly (low blood sugar, he told himself), but he reached for the faucet. The handle turned with a squeak. The first wash of water over his skin was a pleasant shock; the tight, dry patches of old blood began to release within seconds. They drank up the liquid like parched desert mud. For a blissful few moments, he could cut out the maelstrom of confusion all around him and allow himself to appreciate this simple sensation, hands drifting up to his neck involuntarily. The scent of iron rose in a wave around him, buffeted on steam even as red-brown sluiced over his body, fading by the second. He was beginning to relax, just a fraction.

He grazed over the fresh scar on his throat, still scabbed but beginning to heal. He tilted his head back, facing directly into the stream. He parted his lips, let water catch in his mouth before spitting. Then his abdomen caught in a jolt. His hand had passed over that puckered skin where Kakashi had sunk his teeth, and just like that his brief respite crumbled.

Just like that, he was once again hyperaware of Kakashi just a few feet away. Just like that, his body fairly leapt to attention. And it hurt, the way it always hurt, an inexorable cramping that intensified by the second. Obito bit his lip, hissing harshly. Not now—!! He furiously reached for the faucet (catching a glimpse of himself filling out, reflected in the chrome in the process) and turned it to the coldest possible setting. He couldn’t stifle the gasp, shock and pain, that slipped out as he tensed up under the now-frigid water.
He glanced to his left almost frantically, cursing the lack of a shower curtain, only to catch astounding tension in that lanky frame perched on the countertop. In that single glance, Obito could catch the lean muscles tightening in his thighs, the small furtive readjustments his hips were making. Kakashi pressed the heel of his palm between his legs. Exhaled shakily and glared daggers at the wall. And just like that, the fury sparked to life in Obito’s ribcage. He knew why Kakashi couldn’t sit still. He knew.

Obito entertained bloody, violent thoughts for a moment–could he get to Kakashi’s throat quick enough? The curtain rod could do a number on his skull if he moved just right …

But he had tried all of that already. Where had that gotten him?

The answer whispered between his ears: Right here. Right back to this. Who are you?

With a frustrated noise, he seized a washcloth violently and began to scrub at his skin. He rubbed his skin to the point of rawness, until his skin was livid, white and deep pink, bleeding from tiny points. He ignored–tried to ignore–the persistent ache between his legs, seemingly impervious to his best efforts. He scrubbed and scrubbed, feeling that miserable hysterical tightness building in his throat as he did.

The cold, the pain, nothing seemed to stop it. He turned his body toward the tile, hiding himself as best he could. He punched that wet tile, knuckles skipping over grout and splitting open. Over the flow of water, he could hear Kakashi turn around in alarm. He didn’t care. He rammed his fist into the wall. Again. Again.

And the touch of Kakashi’s eyes sent an electric frisson up Obito’s spine, stopping him cold. He squeezed his eyes shut. Stood there, panting, shivering. His head fell in defeat, brow pressed to the tile. A rush of shame and resentment flooded him, bringing words to his lips before he could fully process the thought.

“…I’ll bet you just love this.”

His voice sounded so weak despite the bitterness that propelled it. He shivered under the winter-cold shower spray, body standing in a state of determined rebellion.

Damn.

Those eyes found him again; Obito felt them crawl over his skin, lingering over hips and backside, over what could be seen of Obito’s traitorous arousal. He heard the quick, soft intake of breath that told him all he needed to know.

Something in him snapped.

Obito turned the shower off, and he whirled on Kakashi angrily, heedless of his nudity, of the hard, heavy jut of his own cock. Soaking wet but undeterred, he lunged toward Kakashi. “Well?! You get the show you were hoping for?” He was tired of Kakashi feigning indifference, especially when a single downward glance betrayed him entirely.

There was discomfort and worry visible in Kakashi’s single eye. He leaned away from Obito as though burned, torso angling backward toward the mirror. “Excuse me?” he responded, voice low and incredulous. Obito had him pinned this time, in a manner of speaking. He could escape, of course. Move Obito aside. But he didn’t.

“What’s this, huh?” Obito goaded mockingly, passing a hand between their bodies. As though driven by outside forces, he brushed his fingertips along Kakashi’s inner thigh, moving inward until
he reached the warmth at the junction. Kakashi’s body wasn’t subtle in the least. Obito squeezed, rubbed at it, and felt it thicken and twitch against his palm in answer. His body gave an answering throb. “This is why you wanted me here, isn’t it?” he demanded, “Some live-in masturbatory aid for your crippling guilt? Well? Is it good, Hatake? Is it everything you dreamed of?”

Pain bloomed across his shoulder-blades suddenly as Obito found himself shoved sharply back, causing him to collide with the towel rack. He slid to the floor, wincing. In an instant, Kakashi was towering over him, wreathed in steam and the mirror’s light. His entire frame was tense, vibrating. “You don’t know a damned thing about me,” he snapped. “You never did.”

Obito laughed, loud and harsh. He looked up defiantly, expecting a blow to the face, or some new heated touch.

Instead, Kakashi turned on his heel and bolted once again, slamming the door behind him. The shockwave rattled in Obito’s chest a moment before he kicked out, striking the sole of a bare foot against the door and echoing the sound. Kakashi was disgusting, deranged—and Obito’s persistent problem happily reminded him that he was no better. Obito shifted along the floor until his back was against the door. He relaxed against it, strung along on the last threads of his adrenaline. He was achingly hard, again, from just the shared space and brief contact. This isn’t going away, is it? Damn.

After a bare moment’s hesitation, he reached down and took himself in hand, head tipping back to rest against the door. He was alone now. It was okay to do; he needed relief. And that first stroke was a relief indeed; he spread his legs a little more and eased himself into the touch with a soft groan. He’d never touched himself like this, not even as a young teen. Life and debility had always found a way to intervene. But he found he needed it now, like a vital substance. “Mm,” he murmured, the sound coming like a reflex. He licked his lips as he circled his thumb around the slick, sensitive head of his cock, gripping the shaft tight. He had nothing to prove anymore. Nothing left to defend.

It did hurt to get there, initially, but at full arousal, Obito’s pain subsided. It allowed him to chase the pleasure of the act instead, rutting into his palm even as his wrist took on a quick rhythm. He didn’t want to drag this out, but he did want to be fully satisfied. It was easier without Kakashi in the picture, he imagined. Just a need in his belly, a pulse pounding in his groin. Simple. He was tired. After this he’d sleep well.

Pressure mounted steadily as he worked himself, warmth stealing into his cheeks as he did so. He began to pant in earnest, body coming alight under his own attentions, when suddenly he heard a noise that hadn’t come from his lips. A sharp gasp, shaky on the exhale. Familiar.

He heard the same wet “shk-shk-shk” of a hand stroking a prick off, but it was fainter, with a rhythm different from the tempo of his own ministrations. He paused for a second, held his breath as long as he could manage amidst his panting. And he heard the very softest of groans, forlorn and helpless, but wrapped in heat. Kakashi…

And if that didn’t make Obito’s cock jerk gamely.

“Mmmmh,” he ventured then, moaning a little louder and picking up the pace of his stroking. His hips swiveled, found a sweet rhythm that carried him closer to the peak of this cruel bliss.

“Ahh,” came an answer, closer now to the seam of the closed door. Gooseflesh raised on the nape of Obito’s neck, and stole across the bruised tissue near the bite. A burst of warmth deployed in the pit of his gut, and it was better, so much better than doing this alone. He could hear Kakashi, close and just wrecked, nearly feel his heat radiating through the door. A thought hit him again, much as it had when Kakashi had bent him over that couch, and instead of fighting it he acquiesced, taking his free hand and reaching between his legs, down behind his sack to rub and nudge at his perineum, which
added a strange, bright spark of sensation to the mix. It was good--really good. He knew he wouldn’t last much longer.

There was a shifting on the other side of the door, shadow darkening in the scant space beneath the frame. Kakashi’s breaths were right there, low pants that tapered into stressed whines, just an inch away, over and over. The apex loomed suddenly for Obito, the sound of their mutual need driving him higher and higher. He tugged harder, massaged himself more firmly, and--

“Obito--!”

--His name, involuntary, tumbling out in a staccato shudder, crystal clear through the barrier that separated them.

Ah.

Ah .

With a full-body convulsion, Obito was gone.
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

A brief sexual history of one Uchiha Obito.

Sexuality is a strange thing, unique to each human, infinitely variant in degree, character, and tone.

Obito fancied himself attracted to women, if only in an abstract sense. His first love had been a girl, after all, one he’d been willing to destroy everything to see again. Time marched on, he grew into a man, and his singlemindedness kept the bulk of his thoughts trained on that one full moon more than ten lunar calendars ahead. On the whereabouts of all the Bijuu. On his glorious, methodical mission to save the world from itself.

There was little time for anything else.

A month or two after his twentieth birthday, he’d relented--in part at the insistence of White Zetsu--to go out and experience “adult things”--as though the creature had any idea what that entailed whatsoever--while the other half--Madara’s influence, scoffed at his lack of focus. Obito supposed White Zetsu was actually more curious than he was.

He went out to a smaller city on the border of Grass and Rain, unsure what he was seeking, and unsure of what he might find. He flitted through the neighborhoods, cloaked and cowled. He didn’t dare bare his face, not only because of the disfiguring scars, but also because of his telltale eye. There were spies everywhere, after all. No one was to be trusted, especially in the seedier parts of town.

The river side was busy, even at sundown, full of small watercraft and docks; goods coming in and going out from the small inland port. The day’s more wholesome trade gradually drew to an end. Contraband drifted ashore on barges in unlabeled containers amidst barrels of fish and rice. As the evening wore on and the sparse lamps and lanterns lit, the denizens of the town’s underbelly surfaced.

He walked along the riverbank until he encountered a bridge. The bridge was of a decent size, and as such had a big enough underside to shroud the bank beneath it in deeper shadows.

It was even easier to blend in here; many wore full hoods, a few also wore masks. Here was a place for drug dealing, the exchange of dangerous secrets… and.

Alright! White Zetsu was far too excited for this.

Lined up against the brick walls and wooden beams were girls and women and boys in various states of undress. Even in the looming shadows, some looked far too old, but most looked too young. There was a stench of desperation that loomed over the group, a hungry bunch that turned toward every passing john like sunflowers in the light.

Even to the impassive face of Obito’s mask, they were all charming smiles and crooked fingers, smelling of sweat and dirt overlaid with cheap perfumes. He passed by a tired-looking woman in her forties, body changed by time and childbirth. He avoided a pale, thin young man with deep purple blemishes on his arms and bare legs. Finally, a slender olive-skinned hand brushed the sleeve of his
robe. He turned to see a whore in her early twenties peering at him with kohl-rimmed eyes. She was wrapped in a loosely hanging red yukata, one shoulder bare and breasts all but exposed to the night. It was belted incorrectly; loosely tied and knotted at the front for easy access. Strangely, it was this detail that kept Obito’s attention the most. Having grown up in a highly traditional clan, he found the impropriety fascinating. He turned to face her fully.

She was pretty enough, he thought with mild surprise, considering there were no outward indications that he had any money or other particular value. Long dark hair was tied in a ponytail which cascaded down one shoulder, displaying a large patch of skin at the nape of her neck.

*She must just be crazy, then…* White Zetsu supplied with a giggle.

“Well hello, Mr. Mysterious,” she purred, smelling of that omnipresent cheap perfume and opium smoke. She reached for his mask, brazen, and Obito balked. “How much,” he grit out, willing himself not to flinch from the touch, or to go immaterial and avoid her altogether.

She smiled a slightly crooked smile, and tapped his mask twice before stepping back. “Depends on what you’d like to do.”

He tilted his head slowly, hoping she’d pick up the implication without him having to spell it out. This was awkward enough as things were.

Her smile widened a fraction, painted lips parting subtly. “Eighty-five hundred,” she said, already walking away. “Follow me.”

Obito was well out of his element, but she didn’t seem to mind. That was the thing about paid affections, wasn’t it? He didn’t have to work to impress anyone or make any grand gestures. This was a transaction, and for his money she’d act like she gave a shit about him if he wanted her to. And part of him wanted her to; part of him still wanted what he’d imagined as a child: a soft embrace and kind words, some approximation of comfort in a world that seemed determined to deny him that. The rest of him wanted this as hands-off as possible, impersonal and direct, and preferably over with quickly.

They rounded the corner and went back up a steep bank that brought them back to the street. She swerved lithely through late-night crowds and brought him through a dim alley behind a bar. Obito looked around warily, half expecting to get jumped by thieves (or this girl’s pimp), but she continued on, walking them up a short flight of steps and to a door. They entered, and Obito quickly realized he was either in the lewdest inn of all time, or simply an active brothel. The air was rife with the sound and scent of sex all around him. It set his teeth on edge.

She led him to the far end of one hallway, to a quieter room. Once inside, she turned to face him again. “Did you bring protection?” Ah--Obito froze. He was so inexperienced at this; he didn’t think to come prepared. “It’s fine,” she said quickly, “I have my own.” He was grateful to her for that; though he’d been told he was now immune to most diseases, he didn’t necessarily want to test it out. She worked at her obi for all of three seconds before it fell away.

Her already loose yukata fell fully open in the front, exposing small, pert breasts and a trim, athletic frame that drew his gaze effortlessly. *You could’ve done a lot worse,* White Zetsu opined. Still bold, still recklessly fearless, she sidled up to him. “Want to lose the cloak, at least?”

Behind the mask, he licked his lips nervously as she reached forward and unclasped the cloak from his shoulders, pushing back the hood. “He has hair,” she commented, half to herself, as his shaggy,
slightly unkempt mane tumbled down to his shoulders. She ran her fingers through it teasingly, pausing as she came to the strap of his mask.

“Can I see your face?”

“No.” That was out of the question. *Not unless you want her to run off screaming,* white Zetsu chuckled.

She sighed theatrically. “Private, hmm? That’s fine—as long as your money is real.” There was a prompting note to her voice now, expectation.

Obito sneered privately, tossing ten thousand ryou on the counter in reply. He saw her eyes widen a little, then narrow shrewdly. She turned back to him with a more sincere smile.

“Are you shy?” This was less mocking, more of a direct question. Obito didn’t answer. “Don’t do this much, I’m guessing. Let’s just try something simple. I’m all yours for the hour. I’ll start us off—you just tell me how you like it.”

And with that, she unfastened his pants, sidling in close. She reached in and gripped him, stroking him with expert efficiency as he winced in discomfort behind the mask. He grit his teeth, determined to endure, determined to prove to himself that he wasn’t broken, that he could do this. It was uncomfortable for a long moment, his body responding in slow increments although he found her agreeable enough to look at. As he stood at full readiness finally, the pain receded. He relaxed a fraction. She smiled.

She put a condom on him then, and went to her knees as he stood before her. She opened her mouth—

“Stop,” Obito heard himself say before he even registered the thought.

She blinked, looking up at him. “Sure thing—whatever you wa- a-ant?!” He picked her up bodily with his gloved hands and pushed her back onto the bed. Her eyes were wide and her breathing uneven, and he found he liked that; liked having her off-balance in that moment. Challenging her assumptions.

“Turn over,” he demanded, realizing that the cold, perfunctory creature had taken over, casting aside the affection starved boy, as well as the hapless, virginal young man.

“Whatever you want,” she repeated, rolling onto her stomach and lifting her hips for him. The playful tone had gone out of her voice and she adopted a softer, more submissive demeanor. He took over somewhat clumsily, moving in on her and (after a false start or two), entering her. This felt good, warm and tight and close like he’d expected it to be. He’d kept the rest of his clothes on, so they only made skin-to-skin contact in the one place where they were joined. That was fine.

Things were cleaner like this, they offered him a straightforward point of focus, a single task to accomplish. She made encouraging noises, airy platitudes about his size, his force, whatever she thought he might like to hear. He’d stopped thinking of her as a person, though. He’d stopped thinking much at all. It was simple now, just a rapid pistoning of the hips, a building pressure in his gut, in his balls, that felt good, felt fine, but little more than that.

He felt disconnected.

Worse, he still felt alone.

He finished suddenly, with a jerk and a shudder, and pulled back from her as soon as he gathered
himself. It was claustrophobic behind the mask now, with his flushed face and heavy breathing. He didn’t like it.

He still had forty minutes of her time left. He chose to walk out, utterly disinterested in lingering.

--

He tried again a few years later, just to be sure it hadn’t been a one-time thing. Another town, another woman, much the same bland, marginally satisfying result. It wasn’t worth the trouble, really, in his opinion. He was working on much bigger, better things.

--

Konan was the only woman he’d been with more than once.

Cold, untouchable Konan had approached him in his chambers, only a few months into his time in Amegakure. She had been wary of him from the beginning, attempting to flay him open with her daggerlike stare but ultimately finding no purchase. He knew she was interested, the way a cat is with a new animal that seems harmless. Curious, but cautious. Wary. The air of mystery he cultivated was dangerously unknown to her, and she meant to know it. If for nothing else than to protect the interests of the original Akatsuki against a foreign interloper. As a matter of fact, she was immediate in detecting his Fire Country accent, his Konohagakure origin. She asked him his motivations many times, never once fully buying his “Madara” story.

Insulated from the outside world, high in a tower, surrounded by a curtain of neverending rain, they found what pleasure they could in the grim and dismal day, and into the black dampness of night. When she came to him, he let her shift his mask aside in the midst of passion, said nothing as her golden eyes assessed his scarred features coolly. She took in his Uchiha eyes, and registered that, at least, the clan name he’d given them had been true. She hadn’t said a word at his disfigured face, simply tipping her head back and continuing to ride him. She guided his hand to her slim white neck and pressed his fingers deliberately into her skin, indicating the level of pressure she wanted.

He used to fuck her just like that at her request. Hand on her throat, gently squeezing. She liked it well enough—said all the right things and made all the right sounds—but her eyes would forever remain remote, her true emotions reserved for another, always.

It didn’t bother him at all that she regularly slipped and called him ‘Yahiko’ at the height of their coupling. He knew her story. He served as a placeholder for her as much as she did for him.

In comparison, he could never have brought himself to call her Rin.

(Rin by the shores of the Nakano, singing sweetly with fireflies circling her head like a halo...)

(Never.)

He could never imagine Rin that way, with thighs and breasts and a mature woman’s desires. Her death had preserved her in a girl’s body, kept her virginal and untouchable in his mind. That was safer, especially as time and age had marched on for Obito, leaving childhood and its childish crushes in the distance. It was far better to see her as an angelic martyr for his cause than to sully her memory with any carnal stain.

With Konan, the carnal element sat proudly at the forefront and left little room for anything else. It was enough to know he could make her gasp, even occasionally scream for him. Even though the deep welts her nails left in his skin vanished within seconds, he held tight to the little victories to be found in her sated sighs, or the slight falter of her otherwise graceful gait. When Nagato looked at
him with Yahiko’s face, the two of them Pain personified, Obito smiled behind the mask, knowing that he knew. It made him feel accomplished. It enhanced his sense of control over the Akatsuki, to know at the very least their most aloof member could be made to moan like one of those river-town whores.

Or perhaps he’d never made her do a thing. It could have all been for show. It could have all been to prove something to Nagato.

Konan, like Obito, was only ever in it for herself, looking for a way to move on from a dead man whose face she was forced to look upon every single day. Her dalliance with Obito was temporary; her curiosity was sated, the vital information she sought was (frustratingly, no doubt) denied, and they both gradually turned their eyes back to their greater mission (though he did not wager at the time that they had very different missions). She grew distant again, without explanation. With only a hint of bitterness, he let her go.

A better world was waiting, after all. A world where she was still alive.

One day his hand did find Konan’s white throat again. She’d betrayed him just prior, by compromising the thing he valued the most. He felt bitter irritation for trusting her as he had, even that smallest of amounts, and the degree of his anger actually surprised him. He was brutal with her as they fought, and she, formidable a warrior as she was, gave him no quarter. His native skin burned where her paper bombs had kissed him. She’d cost him an arm (though, fortunately, not an irreplaceable one). She stoked his anger to a boiling point and beyond, made him feel alive as he hadn’t in years though they danced a dance of death. In the end there was something intimate, he felt, in skewering her open once again, this time stabbing her clear through the abdomen. He watched her gasp and struggle, weakening, and thought fondly of their last time twisted together amidst the sheets. She defied him to the very end, and in return he violated her most sacred citadel--her mind--before stealing her last breath away.

--

That had been his life until now; a sparse and largely unsatisfying sexual history with a handful of women and zero emotional connection. And that had been fine. It was enough to know that his body could still manage the function--painful as it was at the start--if necessary.

With women.

But now Kakashi was occupying so much of Obito’s time and space. Far more than he’d ever expected him to. He had felt the full spectrum of emotion possible for one person in Kakashi; jealousy and sympathy, perfect trust and deepest loathing. Betrayal lay at the very heart of it all, though, the one constant theme in Obito’s life. Kakashi’s miserable existence--and his own--were proof that heroes were not to be trusted. That no one was better than the very worst parts of their nature.

And here he was, approaching thirty-two, aware that his life had taken a turn he could never have anticipated. He was doing something he’d never so much as considered. Realizing something very new about himself.

Knowing what had happened with Kakashi was no fluke, that there was going to be a next time.
Wanting there to be a next time.

Phantom teeth sank into the junction of his neck and shoulder, and Obito shattered to pieces.
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Partial acceptance isn't really acceptance at all.

Obito woke with a sharp breath, flinching back from the bright bathroom lights. With a groan, he rubbed a hand against gritty, bleary eyes. He felt stiff and sore. He looked down at himself, blinking drowsily. At some point, he must have drawn a towel around his shoulders and torso, but his legs still lay bare and askew on the floor. The tile had left indentations in his buttocks and thighs.

He shivered.

How long had he been out?

He was alone still, amazingly, left in private behind a closed door. This was new. Had Kakashi seriously just left him on his own? Was he so confident that Obito wouldn't make another attempt on his life?

The idea had somehow fallen to the distant back of Obito’s mind, but Kakashi didn’t know that.

He’d probably just gone for a change of pants or something, or perhaps he’d fallen asleep. Obito chuckled softly to himself at the absurd mental image. It was just ludicrous enough to be possible. There was something comforting, if only a little, in knowing that he wasn’t the only one being affected. Whatever madness had caught him also had Kakashi firmly in its snare. He could use it. He should use it.

He hauled himself slowly to his feet, muscles and joints protesting loudly at the movement. He wobbled slightly as he stood, head swimming. His throat was dry; he was probably dehydrated. And hungry. He was hungry. Not in the desperate, gnawing, starving way, but in a healthy, oddly normal way, considering the plethora of abnormal things going on in his life. It was almost a welcome sensation.

It was hard to believe that only a week had passed.

He walked back over to the shower and turned the faucet on. He was cold—needed to warm up. He stepped back into the spray with a grateful sigh and took his time, washing his hair and warming his bones. He touched his jaw and, with a grimace, noted the patchy bristles that had grown in thickly. His facial hair had lagged behind the hair on his head in terms of growth, largely thanks to the Uchiha family trend against hirsutism. Still, it had been nearly two months since his time in the hospital and by now, his face itched unpleasantly. He ran the shower until he’d exhausted all the hot
water before stepping out again.

His towel lay waterlogged on the floor, so he used Kakashi’s towel to dry himself—not without a small spike of petty glee. He wrapped it around his waist. Kakashi would smell him on it, and Obito hoped the scent messed with him somehow. The spite was still raw under his skin, and even this little bit of defiance felt good. Overall he felt much better, even somewhat enjoying the lingering calm under his skin that came with recent release. He didn’t have to like Kakashi, he supposed, simply because of this new development. If it was bound to continue, and he couldn’t see why it would not, he’d just have to find a way to use it to his advantage. There simply wasn’t room to grieve for his sexuality-that-was, or to wonder at the change. This was simply… whatever it was. Accept it or not, he would have to press on. Acceptance would be less taxing.

As he reached for the door handle, he heard in his mind the slam of the door from earlier, Kakashi’s voice choking out his name in near-desperation. That had meant something.

That had meant something.

He made his way into the hallway, noting the empty space just behind the door, conspicuously devoid of his jailer.

He found Kakashi dressed in his Jounin uniform, stacking plates in the cupboard, as he rounded the corner. He was conscious of the towel sitting low on his hips, and he watched Kakashi curiously for a moment until he froze, aware of Obito’s presence. “I need a razor,” Obito declared bluntly.

Immediately Kakashi turned, his one eye raking involuntarily over Obito’s torso. He drew a heavy breath before looking away quickly, his demeanour appearing almost frightened. That gaze still held its own strange weight, heavy whenever it passed over Obito’s skin. Obito catalogued every movement carefully, determined to commit everything to memory for later consideration. Desire, confusion, bitterness, fear… he could see himself reflected in that. Kakashi was a tangled mess of a million tells.

Kakashi remained wordless for another moment before brushing past him and heading to his room. The door shut abruptly, an uncomfortable echo of previous nights, and Obito frowned. This time however, Kakashi reappeared in short order with a single razor; the drugstore kind that came outfitted with all manner of protective barriers and emollients. Obito found this odd--most ninja made do with a sharpened kunai instead. Then again, Obito supposed that was off the table in his case.

Kakashi didn’t make eye contact as he handed the razor over, with one gruffly worded warning: “Don’t do anything foolish.”

“What, like the hack job you did on my neck the other day? I’d hardly trust you to do it for me.” He meant both the clean cut from the kunai and that aching, still-puffy bite. Kakashi looked irritated, wary. He said nothing to that. “I suppose you’d like to watch,” Obito prodded archly, taking the razor back over to the bathroom and leaving the door open. He let the double entendre sit heavily in the space between them. After a moment of mulish obstinacy, Kakashi followed him, keeping a careful distance and hanging back near the door frame.
Obito offered him a derisive snort, then set to work. He wet and soaped his jaw and set to work clearing up weeks of stubble. The left side of his face was simple enough to manage, taken care of with a few deft scrapes of the razor, but the bumps and ridges of his scars, as ever, proved a challenge. He’d have had better luck maneuvering them with a kunai. “Ah--” he hissed suddenly in response to an unpleasant sting, worsened by the presence of soap. He supposed it was just a matter of time--shitty razor.

And he heard it, a little short intake of breath and an aborted step from the direction of the door. He glanced over at Kakashi from the corner of his eyes for a moment, then pressed a corner of the towel to the nick. If that exposed him further, well. Acceptance.

Obito put the razor down on the bathroom counter and left it there.

“You’re not keeping that out-- Obito--”

“Obito--!!” Obito mimicked in a shriller tone, throwing in a moan or two for good measure. Deliberately reminiscent of those taboo moans through the bathroom door. “Is that how you’re going to call for me from now on?”

Acceptance!

Looking aggrieved, Kakashi threw him a fresh robe, perhaps a little harder than intended. “Shut up and get dressed.”

“Whatever you want,” Obito said airily, and tugged the towel off (Kakashi looked away again, jaw flexing) and slipped the robe on, privately appreciative of the clean scent and feel of it. As he made to close it, he remembered that river town whore with her front-knotted clothes, all the things her mode of dress said before she ever opened her painted lips.

Perhaps there was power in this, he mused--strength in the trappings of vulnerability. He could see Kakashi’s head swivelling involuntarily toward him, gaze clinging to any exposed strip of skin. He looked confused, desperate to make sense of this distinctly different behavior Obito was showing. And suspicious, like any good shinobi, that perhaps Obito knew something that he didn’t.

Good. Let him wonder.

Obito slipped past him with a little smile and made for the kitchen. He made himself a bowl of instant noodles and raided the fridge indiscriminately. For once the food felt truly satisfying as it hit his tongue. He ate slowly, carefully filling his still-sensitive stomach (and leaving his dirty plates on the kitchen counter). In a burst of productivity, he turned the cushions on his couch over for a slightly neater seat. Really, the whole thing was fit for little more than firewood at this point, but it was a marginal improvement overall. He felt better than he had in a very long time. For the moment, he was clean, fed, and had Kakashi completely off his guard. He heard Kakashi’s bedroom door click shut once more.

Obito stretched out on the couch.
He’d gone past the point of no return. They both had.

They never discussed what happened on either side of the door, but it was tacitly acknowledged that a seismic shift had come about, that the tide of possibilities had changed direction. That moment had been an admission for both of them, silently communicating what they would never dare to say aloud: that they had abandoned considering their behavior a fluke.

Three times was the charm, apparently.

So Obito was unsurprised the next time it happened, late, late that very same night when Kakashi gripped his shoulder and turned him around, pressed him against the nearest wall with a leg parting his own. The hand on his shoulder was grasping, almost searching in a way. His eyes were haunted and wild, still so intensely confused, and though Obito shoved back and fought back with viciously bared teeth, he allowed it--more than allowed. He let himself enjoy the inevitable descent into sexual touch, let himself explore. There was a bright, sharp kind of pleasure to be found in scratching at Kakashi’s back, hearing the gasp and hiss as he scored welts into his skin. When he took Kakashi in hand this time, it was deliberate, all to see him spiral out of control, chest heaving and legs trembling. His interactions with Kakashi had become a very deliberate gamble. He took genuine amusement in watching Kakashi try to avoid him and, reliably, fail spectacularly every time.

But there was more to sex than furtive grinding and the friction of a well-placed hand. Obito had no way of knowing how far any of this would go, or what end would come of it. He was sparring a half-familiar opponent in the dark.

In this crucible of an apartment, it was unclear who now held the upper hand.
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Miscalculations and regrets. (tw: a little more internalized homophobia, possible dubcon)

Obito made a miscalculation.

Words were only sparsely used between himself and Kakashi as the days wore on. They had fallen into a pattern of manhandling one another and otherwise giving each other a wide berth. It seemed that any interaction would begin with a complaint or an argument, and quickly deteriorate into a physical altercation. From there, reliably, clothes would come off and things would get messy.

This entanglement was intriguing precisely because it was so vulgar. If Obito hadn't fallen so far he would never have so much as considered encouraging this. If he’d felt there was any merit at all in maintaining an air of dignity. Here at rock bottom, though, he saw no need. He had his personal hangups, of course, long-entrenched perceptions of masculinity and what it meant to be a man. He had his father to thank for much of that, as well as the machismo that tended to stem from a warrior culture. If sex and war were cognates, then receptivity was defeat. Surrender.

Surrender meant death and dishonour. Perhaps that was why he railed against it so. All these years in, he still didn't want to lose to Kakashi. So maybe if he could take the role of the aggressor, have Kakashi be the one left backpedaling, it wouldn't matter so much what they did.

Or perhaps he was still just trying to reconcile the drive of his libido with the person he thought he was.

As a child, his father had been viciously clear on the matter. Uchiha Makoto (and his younger sister Mikoto) were descended from the most elite, most pure line of Uchiha, known for a higher prevalence of powerful Sharingan users. They claimed unbroken ancestry through the multimillennial history of the clan, with notable warlords and clan leaders--Madara and Izuna included--manifesting the Mangekyou Sharingan. Breeding was, therefore, a high priority among this core faction of Uchiha, and his father took that ideal to fanatic lengths. In addition to his near-constant disapproval of Obito’s … everything.

Even Itachi the prodigy wasn’t safe from it. Away from his sister, Uchiha Makoto often made unsolicited observations about him, despite his being a mere child of three. Obito distinctly remembered one conversation, said in passing to another member of the police force.
“That Itachi is such a soft little boy,” he’d said. “I hope he doesn’t turn out ‘like that’. Mikoto tells me he’s shown some amazing potential. Hmph. I haven’t seen anything noteworthy yet. He seems far too attached to Shisui at times.”

So much for family loyalty.

He’d looked over at Obito when he muttered, “Even our respectable clan has its share of duds.”

_You’re turning in your grave, aren’t you, Dad?_

_Good. I hope it kills you twice over._

Here and now, years later, he stood across the living room from Kakashi, embroiled in yet another argument. Even now, after mere minutes, he couldn’t recall how it had started. It didn’t take very much these days. One frustrated gesture on Kakashi’s part caused his long sleeves to slip back a little, and what Obito noticed there infuriated him. The glimpse he caught was brief but, Sharingan or not, his eyes were keen. On Kakashi’s already pale inner wrists, he saw even paler, silvery scars, a series of horizontal scars of varying depth, well-faded, years old. Despite their age, they sparked new anger in Obito, anger and a terrible sort of fascination.

“And when did you get those?” he asked, approaching Kakashi across the living room floor. “Was it after me? After Rin? After Sensei? Why didn’t you just finish the job?” He seized Kakashi’s wrist, forcing it to supinate, sneering at the scars.

Kakashi yanked his wrist back sharply, anger plainly visible in his eyes.

Undeterred, Obito plowed on. “All these years, speaking useless words at the gravesite, and making useless gestures there on your wrists. What the hell did that help? Did that fix a goddamned thing?” He was angry, and it felt strange. If Kakashi’d just offed himself, things might have gone smoother for him during the war. But if he’d done that—

“It’s none of your business, Obito, so leave it.”

“I wonder, did you touch yourself and call for me like that all these years? ‘Obito’?” he simpered,
needling Kakashi more. He felt like a rockslide tumbling downhill. Every volley between them gained momentum, and he was rapidly careening out of control. “Couldn’t even die right, could you?”

“That’s enough,” Kakashi muttered through grit teeth. There were splotches of colour high enough on his cheeks to be seen even over the mask.

Obito plowed on, falling back on old, familiar lines. “At least I was **decisive**! At least I did something—”

“You STARTED A WAR,” Kakashi shouted, cutting him off, “You’ve killed **thousands** of people!”

But Obito was on a roll now. “They shouldn’t have let you do this, have me here in your house,” he sneered. “How did you ever even pass their psych evaluations?! You’re compromised, unstable—”

“You're a prisoner!” Kakashi snapped, voice vibrating with tension. “You don’t get a say.”

And somehow, those were the words hit Obito like a slap, stunning him to silence for a beat. Despite the truth of the statement, it caused a wild, irrational fury to surge to the surface. “Don’t I?” he hissed, hands balling into fists.

He swung and, as testament to his improving strength, managed to catch Kakashi cleanly across the jaw. Kakashi reeled and grunted, tugged down his mask sharply and wiped at his nose and mouth. His lip curled and his eyes flashed. There was a pause, a brief and loaded, then he rushed forward and tackled Obito to the floor.

Almost as he landed, Kakashi slugged him point blank. Obito’s head cracked back against the floor. His lip caught on his teeth and he felt it split, tasted blood. Adrenaline surged, the nightly dance of their inner monsters turning ugly again. Kakashi was warm against him, fit snugly between his legs. He swung again, only to have his hands trapped and held together over his head.

Obito snarled and bucked, far stronger now yet not quite strong enough to move an angry jounin from atop him. Or perhaps just not particularly willing. *Instigate*, he thought, *see where this leads*. The throbbing in his skull and lip drove his aggression, and he found himself smiling—grinning madly—with the taste of iron in his mouth and his pulse pounding in his ears.
He pulled one hand free, relying on the weak grip point between forefinger and thumb. And, of course, instead of shoving Kakashi off of him, he slipped that hand between their bodies and gave Kakashi a squeeze. That was all it took to flip the switch. Kakashi rumbled low in his throat, and sat back on his heels for a second with a look in his eyes not unlike a snake about to strike. He lunged in again, knocking Obito back, but this time his hands went for Obito’s belt again, ripping the knot open and exposing his front.

In the back of his mind, Obito registered that he had become fully hard, and hadn’t so much as noted the usual pain that came with it. Perhaps it was the distraction of Kakashi pushing him away just a little, enough to line his legs up with Kakashi’s silver head. Kakashi’s eyes were on his cock, flicking up and down the length of it as though trying to assess it. Obito watched Kakashi breathe and look, lips slightly parted.

It was an extremely distracting visual.

Then Kakashi put his mouth on Obito’s inner thigh, and Obito’s breath hitched as he felt the nip of Kakashi’s teeth there, so high up the sensation resonated in his balls and belly. Kakashi bit again and again, hard enough to leave bright red bruises immediately. Obito could feel sweat prickling at his scalp and on his chest. Both thighs were worked on, up and down, down and up, always skirting the central issue, to Obito’s intense frustration. He spread his legs wider in impatience, his length brushing Kakashi’s cheek.

His lip throbbed again, already feeling heavy and swollen.

_Do something._

But he didn’t, at least not what was expected. No, Kakashi withdrew again, this time shucking his overshirt and pants. And maybe it was the angle, perhaps the lighting, but Obito’s eyes caught on those silvery rows of scar tissue again, and the one word that passed his lips was, “Pathetic.”

Kakashi flinched, livid, then swung at Obito again, this time a wicked-fast hook that toppled Obito backward, twisting with its impact. He landed facedown on the floor, and Kakashi was up close behind him immediately, pressing him into the mats. There was an arm weighing down on the vulnerable back of his neck. “Who’s pathetic?!” Kakashi demanded, “Look at yourself!” And despite himself, Obito flinched as well, heat flooding his face.

Kakashi’s free hand pushed Obito’s robe aside, exposing his bare back. He felt that same hand immediately spread over one cheek, kneading and pulling at it—and the twitch of a hot, hard thing nearby on his skin as well. As soon as Obito stilled, registering this for what it was, Kakashi
punctuated his pawing with one sharp, ringing slap. It should have been humiliating, but Obito’s erection had other ideas. It twitched gamely, full and wanting.

_By the sage, I’ve gotten shameless._

“Fuck. You.” Kakashi’s hand reached low on Obito’s abdomen, gripped his shaft and gave it a rough stroke.

“Say my name,” Obito snarled, hips jerking toward that touch, then rocking back at the hardness behind him. He wanted to hear it again, said with heat this time.

“Fuck you, _Obito_ --hell, you seem to _want_ that,” Kakashi muttered, something like confused wonder simmering amidst the anger in his voice as he ground impatiently against Obito’s ass.

And, damn him, he _did_ want that. “Then shut up and do it,” he snarled recklessly, “Take action for once.”

The moment the words passed his lips he felt blunt pressure against his backside, a firm dry press that went nowhere. Then there was a pause, a sound of Kakashi spitting, then a wetter--only marginally wetter, really--press of _holy shit_ Kakashi’s cockhead, seemingly impossibly large in that moment. It breached him slowly at first, but each bit of stretch took him by surprise--his body fought back against the entry with increasing force. He breathed shakily. _Relax_, he urged himself. An anus wasn’t a vagina. It would take more care to make a cock fit.

But he wanted to know. He did.

If he was...this way… shouldn’t he like it?

Kakashi kept going, and Obito felt the slight give as the flare of his head passed the rim of his muscle. And Kakashi paused, just a moment, his breath every bit as uneven as Obito’s own. _Relax_. Kakashi’s hand ceased its casual attention to Obito’s cock and came to rest on his hip, where the fingers dug in almost painfully.

“Like that?” Kakashi growled, tightening his grip a fraction more.
Obito hissed in reply. Kakashi was still angry. So was he. This was just another fight, transposed. Why pull a punch now?

Obito nearly said ‘wait’; he’d just barely begun to accommodate Kakashi’s entry when Kakashi surged in sharply. His vision tunneled for a second. His ears rang. He couldn’t breathe. He was the goddamned poet laureate of pain and here he was, paralyzed and transfixed by this searing discomfort radiating through him. From a cock in his ass that he’d demanded. He grit his teeth and breathed as best he could.

When they’d torn the Juubi out of him, he’d felt it on a cellular level, on a spiritual level. This wasn’t that–this was entirely in his body, entirely visceral. He felt every tense, overstretched muscle aching in concert. He felt too full, crammed full of Kakashi without enough room left to breathe. He clenched his hands into trembling fists, cursing softly, far softer than Kakashi’s loud, ragged breathing above him. Being taken on the floor like an animal. He oughtn’t be surprised. What else should he have expected? He’d goaded Kakashi to this point, encouraged it with his own ill-formed desires.

He felt like an open wound, raw and stinging, and it was his own fault.

And even so, even so there was a flicker as the head of Kakashi’s dick slid over something deep inside Obito that made his toes curl. That was it, he realized in sudden wonder. That was what could make this pleasurable. If Kakashi would just slow down, maybe--

And then, almost as if to spite that thought, Kakashi began to move in earnest. In an instant, burning friction utterly steamrolled that brief, pleasant sensation.

Forget pleasure seeking, Obito admonished himself. This was a fight, damn it. No quarter, no mercy. He braced his legs wider, trying anything to lessen the strain and stretch he felt. It was almost as if his innards were being dragged out of his body then shoved forcibly back in just as quickly. The saliva only did so much; the friction was dry like sandpaper and agonizing. Obito shuddered, nauseous. His erection was flagging fast, arousal rapidly giving way to a litany of pain.

If I asked him to stop, would he?

It wasn't worth thinking such foolish things.

He didn't try to stop Kakashi. He didn't say anything at all, though his eyes were burning. The
tatami floors dug into his knees and elbows.

This was fine; they’d never been gentle, that wasn't the arrangement--endure it, *endure* …

“*Argh* --” he cried out involuntarily, the pain suddenly lancing past the barrier of his mantra. His back lit up with this bright intense series of spasms, for a moment eclipsing the agony he was feeling in his ass. His mouth fell open, and he winced with every thrust.

And his father’s voice slithered to the fore, those blistering insults ringing truer than ever in Obito’s mind. *Look at yourself. Look at what you’ve allowed him to do to you.*

He’d get him back. He'd make sure he felt this too, knew what he was doing, hurt just the same or worse.

Something warm was running down his thigh. There were hands on his hips, bruising, slamming him back on that painful intrusion.

How much of a man was he, really?

There were people *watching this happen* .

He felt like he was coming apart from the inside.

Did Kakashi know? Did he care?

Forget miscalculation--this was a *mistake* .

With a bitten off shout, Kakashi stiffened behind him. There was a pulse of heat inside him, Obito noted detachedly. Then another, and another, and-- *Well. Good for you, Hatake.*

Kakashi pulled out, breathing harshly.
Everything felt swollen and miserable. The warm trickle down his thigh increased. He didn't dare look at it. He was shivering uncontrollably now, and that burning in his eyes, fuck, began to spill over his cheeks. Obito didn't sob, didn't make another sound, but hot tears ran down his cheeks unbidden, and fell to the tatami as his head dropped. These too were swallowed instantly by the mats. By now, they surely held many secrets. He felt the cold air rush over his skin as Kakashi pulled away. He reached back blindly until he could grasp the edge of his robe, which he pulled over his body as best he could with numb fingers.

He couldn't even identify the emotions he was feeling. He could have punched Kakashi's face in. He didn't feel violated—not precisely—but he did note an abstract sense of loss. He ached. That was it. He needed a shower. Anything. At that precise moment, though, even standing seemed to be a tall order. His legs refused to respond, shaking, aching from the thighs up. He couldn't get his feet under him, no matter how hard he tried. He huffed, growled in frustration, but made no headway.

He heard Kakashi behind him for a few beats—refused to look around at the man just quietly observing his struggle. He turned his head further away, unwilling to let the wetness on his face be seen. He resented Kakashi so intensely just then, all the more so when he heard him stand (so easily, damn him), pause, then walk away.

*You're a prisoner. You don't get a say.*

There was snow falling outside. He could see small flakes swirling in the wind, illuminated by the street lights.

*Pathetic.*

Obito toppled to his left, wincing at the impact, and lay there a moment, just focused on breathing. His heartbeat and breaths slowed with time, and the stubborn tears on his cheeks eventually dried.
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Gai is more perceptive than he's often given credit for.

(And also, he never shattered his leg, since Resurrected!Madara never happened).

Gai was concerned. Had been for some time now.

The war had been over for months at this point, and fall had bled into a dreary early winter. Everyone’s lives had been permanently altered by the events in October; the funeral ceremonies had yet to cease, because bodies were still being identified on the field. The economies of the five major nations had all but collapsed. Missions had become scarce for all but advanced Chuunin and most Jounin, and among this number, there were so many who were injured, retired from combat, or dead. Even what little there was took all of their manpower to maintain. He had watched with trepidation as his comrades dwindled, many of the survivors withdrawing to their families and away from service.

Gai didn’t have that opportunity, himself. He had no family left to speak of, beyond his team--now fractured, perhaps beyond repair--and a few good friends. There was one good friend in particular he was immensely worried for.

More than anyone, Kakashi hadn’t been right since the war.

He’d known Obito as a child, of course; remembered winning an easy Chuunin Exam victory against him, mostly. But he sincerely admired every hard-working classmate, every ninja who went above and beyond to train and improve themselves. Kakashi worked very hard, but his natural gifts were many. Gai was heartened to see that, despite the automatic prestige of his name, Obito sweat and toiled for every skill he acquired. That was something to be respected. It still defied belief that that bright-eyed boy had become something so depraved.

Gai had been there when Naruto had broken the mask off of Obito’s face. Even his own considerable shock in that moment was quickly forgotten when he glimpsed Kakashi, stunned and frozen, anguish in a way Gai could scarcely fathom. He tried to imagine--and couldn't manage it--seeing someone he had venerated, someone long presumed dead, appearing out of nowhere on the opposing side of a battle, with so much blood on their hands. How would he feel if it were his father there, disfigured and terrible, a hideous parody of his former self?
And when Obito attacked again, it was as though Kakashi the General had fled the field entirely. He moved so much slower, his strikes came so much weaker. Gai knew Kakashi's usual speed and strength nearly as well as he knew his own. It was nowhere to be found all of a sudden, as Obito cut him down with ease.

Gai had seen for himself how lost Obito truly was, felt the anguish of seeing one of his young charges, the endlessly promising, gracefully tempestuous Neji, fall victim to Obito’s merciless onslaught. But then, not long after, and with victory well-secured, it was Kakashi again who drew all eyes, not just his own. It was Kakashi in the center of the otherwise silent battlefield, shouting himself hoarse, near-hysterical, striking at Obito with anything but a lethal blow. Gai had taken upon himself to pull Kakashi off of him, giving space for other soldiers to move in and secure the unconscious, bloodied criminal. And Gai had heard, with Kakashi so close against him, that cyclical mantra, “I can’t, I can’t, I can’t”, with a voice that was tight, choked, breaking. He’d just about carried Kakashi off the field that day, and sat with him that night in the camp, shelving his own grief, and putting off facing Lee’s bowed head and Ten Ten’s trembling shoulders. Waiting for Kakashi’s breathing to slow.

Kakashi had been doing so well for himself lately. The last four years or so had been so positive, attacks on the village and massive world war notwithstanding. Gai had seen so many genuine smiles, actual light laughter. Kakashi had developed, Gai thought, another cause, a reason to keep moving forward. It had given him hope.

Becoming a sensei to genin had brought Kakashi out of his shell, demonstrating a childish exuberance at times that had, in retrospect, probably been born of Obito’s memory. Gai had always wondered at Kakashi’s integration of two very disparate personalities into his adult self. Was it forced? An act? A means of coping with loss? Regardless, it had seemed a pleasant shift for a time, and he’d appreciated every playful bout of rivalry, from training challenges to eating competitions.

He hadn’t ever been able to disrupt Kakashi’s morning ritual by the memorial, but for the rest of the day he felt he truly had his friend with him—present, and bitingly teasing as was his tendency. Normal—or as close as Kakashi could likely come to it. Even when Kakashi pushed him away, Gai knew his company was needed. And for Kakashi he’d stay, close but not touching, nearby if needed, and offering Kakashi what he’d never ask for on his own. A friend. A companion.

All of that seemed lost now.

In the days following the war, as weary shinobi gathered themselves and limped home to their villages, Gai had been drawn in a million different directions. He had report after report, debriefing after debriefing, a long and painful meeting with the Hyuuga clan—watching Hyuuga Hinata cry silently while heavy tears coursed down his own cheeks—and his own team’s immeasurable loss to manage. He had the heavy task of continuing to affect positivity and train with a TenTen who sobbed, with a Lee gone quiet.
He was preoccupied; busy for those critical first days, and during that time something just as critical slipped through his fingers. Kakashi had begun a new vigil, absent the old Shinobi memorial, he made a daily trek across town to the prison. He would linger there until dusk, then walk quietly home, oblivious to his surroundings, deep in thought. And by the time Gai managed to intercept him on one of those such walks, it was all too late. Kakashi barely paused to acknowledge him as he trudged home, though Gai followed at his side, trying to reach out, to engage. Kakashi had replied to his queries with little more than stilted half-sentences. “Have to find Tenzou.” “Nothing today.” and the like. Kakashi didn’t invite him up to his apartment. Didn’t come around to find the other jounin on the rare nights they still met for dinner.

And then the recovery of Tenzou. Kakashi had blown past Gai at a full sprint one evening, beelining from the prison to the Hokage’s office. Four days later he returned with a small squadron, Tenzou’s tired body riding on his determined back.

And by the next day Kakashi had transitioned from a nightly ritual at the prison to a daily one at the hospital, almost seamlessly. Gai saw even less of him; Kakashi only took new missions if they were critically necessary, and both Tenzou and Obito were under one roof--he had nowhere else to be. Gai was ashamed to admit it, but he felt almost jealous. It was wrong to think that way, though, wasn’t it? He needed to be supportive and understanding; that was what Kakashi truly needed from him just then.

But at Obito’s trial, Kakashi essentially dug his own grave and flung himself into it recklessly. Gai was never a man to encourage death where it was not strictly necessary, but he couldn’t see how this solution made any sense. House arrest? Cohabitation? Kakashi didn’t have an objective sense of the effect Obito had on him, and Obito had no idea what his death all those years ago had done to the man. Execution made sense.

Obito hadn’t seen what Kakashi had become in his absence, how close he’d come to the edge.

Obito had never dressed Kakashi’s wrists at night when he had forgotten himself in his hysteria, scrubbing his hands raw and muttering that the knife must have “slipped”--as it apparently had, several times, on both arms. Or cleaned that blood off the floor, while watching Kakashi (who was wrapped in a thick blanket, staring dully at nothing) out of the corner of his eye the whole time.

Obito had never carried Kakashi’s limp form out of innumerable bars and alleyways their early twenties, the gentle ghost that would bring the wayward shinobi home to the safety of his bed. He had never watched Kakashi’s breathing with perfect attention after a night of bingeing, fearful of the next one being the last.
And Obito wasn’t here now, to see Kakashi falling apart in slow increments.

Gai was searching for a mission to get his team back on the field. He’d taken several of his own, of course, but it was time to get Lee and Ten Ten back into action. His kids—and really, that’s how he saw them—needed to start moving forward with their lives again, and enjoying what remained of their youths. A confidential document run to Lightning Country sounded promising. They could push their speed—Lee would like that—and Lightning was developing a new range of projectile weapons—something to catch Ten Ten’s interest. He was hopeful… perhaps in time, he’d see the light return to his charges’ eyes once again. The mission departed tomorrow. He held the scroll in his hand tightly. He’d take this one.

The door to the missions center opened, and he glanced up from the desk.

Kakashi looked like death today, Gai thought sadly. Over these months, he’d watched the slow progression of dark circles beneath Kakashi’s eyes advancing like shadows across the moon. They were markedly worse today, practically engraved onto Kakashi’s features. He certainly hadn’t slept. Gai wondered how many nights it had been.

Kakashi kicked the snow off of his boots and unwound his scarf. He moved slowly, methodically, and Gai noticed his hands trembling, just slightly. He also noticed how many pairs of eyes alit on Kakashi as he entered, how guarded and assessing those glances were. It was no secret what had happened with Obito’s trial, especially among the higher echelon of Konoha nin. They could all see how it affected him, especially as the weeks went on. Kakashi was an impeccable actor, but even he had his limits, and they’d been surpassed for some time now.

The rumors had begun to circulate as well; they never thought Gai was listening, but he was. He simply didn’t want to believe them. Something wasn’t right in Kakashi’s apartment. Kakashi wasn’t alright.

Gai pocketed his scroll and approached Kakashi cautiously as he began to peruse a stack of medium-risk S rank missions. Of course Kakashi could sense him getting nearer, but Gai didn’t want him to be suspicious of his intentions. So he led with a booming, “ETERNAL RIVAL!!” and clapped a heavy hand onto Kakashi’s shoulder. Kakashi, however, jumped at the sound and the contact, whirling quickly to slap Gai’s hand away. There was a pause, and the room fell silent; at least ten nin regarding their exchange with some surprise. Kakashi looked surprised himself, staring at Gai with one wide, bloodshot eye. He blinked, and suddenly his carriage changed. He laughed, false as anything, and just chided Gai with a light, “Wow, you got me!” His chuckle faded and he scratched at the back of his head, trying to shift the conversation toward small talk.

But Gai couldn’t hear him just then. Kakashi’s long sleeve shifted away from his wrist. Gai expected the scars; he knew them well. But there were also fresh, finger-sized bruises on this pale skin, trailing
away up his arm. Gai sucked in air quickly, causing Kakashi to halt his prattle and follow Gai’s gaze. He dropped his arm swiftly and pulled his sleeves down with a sharp tug. He flashed Gai a tight smile and just subtly shook his head. Kakashi offered him a pat on the arm, and perhaps it was meant to be conciliatory, but it only served to worry Gai even more.

Kakashi turned to the stack of new mission offers, and finally settled on an overnight mission; which he signed up for with what Gai could only read as relief in his entire frame. He shot Gai a brief glance as he made for the door again, and then he was gone, out into the swirling wind.

Kakashi was not alright. This was the longest time Gai had gone in years without visiting Kakashi’s apartment, and he intensely regretted that now. He could have been there. Should have. He had always been one of the limited few Kakashi permitted to enter at will since Obito’s imprisonment began, but there had never been cause--entry was meant to be limited, except in cases of emergency. This, however, probably counted as one.

Later that evening, as dusk cloaked the village, he turned onto Kakashi’s block. Kakashi would have left for his mission by now. It was as good a time as any to confront the fiend occupying Kakashi’s home. He scaled the steps to the third storey apartment, two at a time, and finally arrived at Kakashi’s door. Two ANBU guards appeared at the doorframe immediately. He recognized Bear, the tall, broad acting captain of the foursome, and Eagle, a similarly tall, but willowy man with hair that reminded him--painfully--of Neji’s. Eagle whispered, “Oh, good,” and Bear looked at him sharply, face unreadable behind the stylized mask. Eagle flinched, and his head hung a fraction. Gai glanced between them curiously, hoping for more, but this was ANBU. Eagle had already said too much. Bear opened Kakashi’s front door, and stepped aside to let Gai enter. The room beyond was incredibly dark. The barrier wards were weighted, and the threshold was almost difficult to cross, though he wasn’t the intended target. Gai stepped through, shuddering a little.

The air was thick and heavy inside the apartment, and the place was shrouded in darkness, one lonely night light in the main hallway casting faint light against oppressive shadows. It took Gai’s eyes several seconds to adjust. He felt the nearby wall for a light switch. He flicked it on, realizing with some chagrin that the lights of Kakashi’s foyer were small, narrow in their range. The living room beyond was still largely in darkness, but there was a palpable flicker of chakra on the far wall, a little to his left. The couch, most likely.

_This man took Neji’s life_ leaped into his mind, adding a fresh spike of hurt to Gai’s already tumultuous emotions. That feeling was impossible to shake.

Obito spoke. “Gai. Long time no see.” He still wasn’t used to that voice, to the raspy, bitter timbre of it. He focused into the darkened living room and finally made out a dark form, laid out on Kakashi’s couch, lying on his side, from what he could tell. Gai approached a few steps, squinting in the dark. A part of him he was not proud of hoped that Obito would give him a reason to continue their battle from the war. Perhaps even finish it. Obito seemed to do that to people these days, bring
their worst selves to the surface.

“What have you done to him?” The words fell from his lips too easily. Tact had never been his strong suit, and with emotion running high he barreled straight to the point. He felt like a bull in a china shop, brimming with angry strength, and quite liable to break something.

Obito just looked at him, the red of his Sharingan and the violet of the Rinnegan glittering in the dark like jewels. “Nothing he hasn’t invited.” What? He couldn’t even offer Gai the respect to sit up. He lay on his side, knuckles propping his chin up just slightly, and looked at Gai, barely more than a dark silhouette in the gloomy apartment. The other light switches were behind Obito, and off in the hallway that lead to Kakashi’s room and the bathroom.

Gai rushed forward and grabbed him by the collar, an uncharacteristic rage rising in his chest. He lifted Obito easily--too easily?--to his feet and held him there.

Unperturbed, Obito simply reached to his left and flicked on a lamp. Gai sucked air in through his teeth. He looked Obito over with wide eyes, utterly lost for words in the moment. For a long moment, he simply could not process what he was seeing.

His hand relaxed in the midst of his shock. He let Obito go.

Obito’s black robe hung open over his chest, revealing a different reality written upon his skin. Gai could see bruises and scratches, a twenty-four hour old split lip, and dusky purple bites on his inner thigh which were set into plain view and sharp contrast. Gai was no tracking specialist, but he knew what kind of teeth could leave those distinct marks. And Obito was thin, such a far cry from the stocky boy he remembered, or indeed even the robust presence on the battlefield from a few months ago. His marks told a story, one that clashed painfully with the narrative Gai had tried to adopt.

Kakashi, you…

Obito caught him looking, and stared at him with those disquieting mismatched eyes--like Kakashi’s in reverse. Different. Sinister. “What have I done to him indeed, Gai,” he said darkly, “You may as well ask what he’s done to me.”

In a state of shock and heartbreak, Gai couldn’t stop himself from looking. He noticed what looked like a particularly deep bite, an indentation at the junction of Obito’s neck and shoulder. Obito noticed him noticing and was quick to pull the neck of the robe up to cover it. Strange. He acted as
though that one mark was somehow different from the other bruises, cuts, and welts. Private. He certainly wasn’t shy about the rest of himself.

What did it mean?

And what was this feeling? This sudden, hollow pain which had begun just under his breastbone was an anguish, something quiet and close, something that couldn’t be expressed with his mainstay of full-throated proclamations, rigorous exercise and powerful effort. It was difficult to speak. His throat felt tight.

Suddenly Obito’s features lit with a new terrible energy. The corners of his lips curved into a twisted, ugly smile. “What’s with that look, Gai? Oh--are you jealous?” And he cackled cruelly, for a moment transforming into a vicious creature, as fearsome as he’d once been in battle. Then the moment passed, quickly as it had come, and Obito was thin, pale, and damaged again. “Don’t be,” Obito said, gaze slipping to the side, to the floor. “He bites.”

Gai was back outside before he fully realized the fact, gulping in cold winter air like his lungs had been starved for it. His shoulders burned somewhat from brushing past Eagle and Bear, who’d leapt down to protect the open door from potential escape. Something cold brushed his cheek. Wet snow tumbled down in fat, dense flakes. They were pristine as they fell, but once they landed, they were subsumed quickly into the brown slush underfoot.

His throat felt so tight.

What was this? He feared for Kakashi now more than ever, and yet not at all in the way he’d expected to.
Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

Sakura makes a house call.

The sun was obnoxiously bright this morning, Sakura noted with a reluctant yawn. She slurped at her second cup of coffee absently. It was 9 AM, and the winter sun was still hanging low in the sky, burning through the window of her office. Frankly, she was happy her office had windows; most junior medic-nin had little cubicles in interior rooms of the hospital that never saw the light of day. That was really just as well, though; a thirty-six hour shift was less miserable if you weren’t really paying attention to the sunrises and sunsets that escaped you. Sakura had progressed through her training with a speed that seemed to impress her instructors—though, she supposed, having the legendary Tsunade herself as her chief preceptor had probably helped quite a bit. At the age of seventeen (though she’d be eighteen very soon, she reminded herself with excitement), she had surpassed some ninja with ten years on her, and was happily occupying a position as chief resident, which meant less of the grunt work and more time spent making bigger decisions and tackling harder cases. She was able to pursue her specialty interests—she had two, like any good overachiever—so her desk was piled high with books and scrolls on both toxicology and trauma surgery. Not half bad for a teenager, she figured.

She had planned to take the morning for paperwork and reading, but a summons late last night had derailed those plans. Instead she had a now-familiar medical chart open on her desk, and she was scanning it with intense focus. Gai-sensei had come by the hospital last night as she was (finally) ready to head home for the day—and she’d been immediately stunned into attention by his grim expression. He had looked at her with such seriousness, and asked her to check in on Obito as soon as possible. He was, largely, his usual boisterous self, but there was a gravity in his eyes and a downturn to his lips that upset Sakura. Something was clearly very wrong.

Obito was her patient, technically, Sakura having been the chief resident during his hospital stay, a pupil of both the Hokage/Chief Medical Officer of Konoha, and one of the field surgeons who’d disabled his doujutsu. She already had more history with him than most, but that didn’t make dealing with him any less daunting. This man had singlehandedly brought Konoha to its knees—incited their entire world to war. She’d be a fool not to treat him with heightened caution. Truthfully though, she hadn’t seen Obito since the day he was discharged from the hospital for his hearing with the tribunal. At the time, she’d seen a frail, exhausted, angry man with barely acceptable vitals head out into the blazing autumn sun to meet his fate. Without being present for the trial itself, she had still known the outcome; she had signed off on the discharge paperwork, and had seen without a doubt Kakashi-sensei’s address as Obito’s new dwelling.

She wanted to think that she couldn’t possibly understand the reasoning behind this decision—but
Sakura was decidedly against lying to herself, and this would be quite the lie. It seemed she and Kakashi-sensei both suffered from unhealthy attachments to problematic Uchiha men. It wasn’t as though she hadn’t spent her time in the prison with bound-and-warded Sasuke until he was released and gone from the village doing who-knows-what.

She shook herself. That was not the train of thought to follow right now. He was gone, at least for the moment, and she’d learned a long time ago that life must still move on, even if your own heart is breaking. A shinobi was one who endured. Always.

She picked up her PD kit and left her office, mind switching efficiently back to the case of Uchiha Obito and what could possibly have Gai-sensei so shaken. He hadn’t been terribly forthcoming with details, so her imagination was the limit. She imagined starvation, self-harm, a declining mental state, some as yet undiagnosed disease… perhaps he was finally succumbing to the effects of the Juubi’s extraction, or his separation from the Senju Tree. Perhaps she was completely wrong and he’d somehow gotten stronger or Kakashi-sensei had come to some kind of unforeseen danger?

If that was the case, though, what could she do? There was a strange cognitive dissonance to being able to sucker punch a mountain into rubble, but still be unnerved by a precarious situation with one single ninja. She made a quick detour to the battle formulary to get a healthy supply of sedatives and an extra fistful of kunai. She could probably take down a weakened Uchiha Obito, but Sakura wasn’t one to fly blind. If Obito was holding any special cards up his sleeve, caution only made sense. Satisfied with her preparations, she left the hospital. This couldn’t wait any longer.

The walk to Kakashi’s apartment was brief, and Sakura walked at a good clip, though she had to deflect a few friendly shouts from Ino, her parents, and the inevitable patient or two asking her to check out some new rash. As she approached the door to Kakashi’s apartment, she was met by two ANBU at the door. She opened her mouth to identify herself, but they both nodded in recognition. A distinctive look had its benefits. They were a small-built woman (who was likely, much like Sakura, far stronger than her physique let on), and an average height ginger-haired man. Their masks were quite similar; his had several more markings, but that was about it.

Sakura was privy to some things about Obito’s overall management; she knew the four-man ANBU detail—at least their codenames. This was Mink and Badger, then. She was good at reading body language (loving a stoic brick of a person tended to hone those skills). Applied to the situation, she easily caught how Badger fidgeted, how Mink’s breathing sped up as though she wanted to say something—anything—to Sakura. Instead, however, she just gestured to the door, and stepped aside. Sakura took a deep breath. For a short, foolish second, she found herself wishing her sensei were near, like he was when they were younger. Late and unreliable as Kakashi often was, he had always been there to protect them when it really counted. Gai-sensei had been specific, though. He’d urged her to go today, and before Kakashi was due back from his mission.

She hoped she’d find out why.
She turned the handle and walked in. The barrier prickled on her skin, striking her almost like chills. Mink and Badger flanked her closely on either side, helping her to feel a little less like she was wandering into a lion’s den alone.

Obito was right there as she stepped in--across the room on a couch, staring at all three of them with cold, dead eyes. “Oh, goody,” he drawled, “What the fuck is this?” He didn’t move much, just propped his head up and surveyed them individually.

“I’m here to conduct an examination on you, Uchiha-san,” Sakura said lightly, stepping forward and setting her bag down. She saw his eyes widen, a flash of consternation flicker over his features, then nothing.

“Is that right?” he shot back, ”You can turn around and get the hell out, then.” And oh, she was tempted to. She’d never been to Kakashi-sensei’s apartment before, and right now the atmosphere in the place was absolutely sickly.

She took another determined step forward. “Unfortunately it’s not your call. You’re still a patient, and what’s more, you’re a prisoner. This is necessary.”

His features twisted for a second again. Something was off. More off than the whole situation was in its essence. “Uh huh,” he replied after a moment. “So I keep being told. “ He glared at the ANBU, then straight into Sakura’s eyes. She’d been struck by the Sharingan before, and knew firsthand the power of that doujutsu to stun a person into insensibility. This wasn’t that. It shouldn’t have been anything after the chakra blocking procedure they’d done, but it still somehow felt like the ground shifted beneath her feet. It was just for second, but she knew it was real. Shit.

The next moment he was sitting up, moving slowly and stiffly, like an old man with terrible arthritis. Sakura had already begun to collect a general impression of him, his level of distress, the overall state of his body. He couldn’t suppress a wince as he came to an upright position. This was already different. Although he had been extremely weak, the last time she saw him he’d been able to sit well enough. What had happened since then?

She took him in from head to toe, gleaning what information she could before examining him. His hair had grown in over the intervening weeks, thick and black on his scalp again. He was Sasuke-kun’s maternal cousin, if the records were accurate. And if she looked past the mass of scars, past the stronger jaw and tired, older eyes, she could see the resemblance in his straight, symmetrical nose, and well-balanced mouth. (Obito’s lower lip had a fuller pout, she noted absently. Or perhaps Sasuke-kun’s were just so often pressed together into a dour line that they’d lost their fullness--ugh, no, stop.)
Obito would've been dangerously handsome if he hadn't been so unfortunately disfigured.

But that lip was split, a little purple in the middle. There was bruising on his nose and cheeks, cheeks which were a little sunken. Obito had been hit, at least once, but goodness knew how he’d earned that. It had been recent, though. That much was obvious. His frame was thin beneath his robes, but still improved a little, at least since she’d seen him in the hospital. The way he moved, though, it hinted at injury more extensive than what she could see now.

She took a seat on the coffee table opposite him, spreading her hands to look as peaceable and harmless as was possible in this situation. “Let’s start with a simple question: how did you get hit? And why?”

He scowled, more intimidating now that he was within arm’s reach. “Took a swing at my jailer.” He shrugged.

“In your condition, you’re not much of a match for him, are you?”

“I still clipped him. He got me back, as you can see.”

“Hm,” she hummed noncommittally. It wouldn’t do to antagonize him now--any more than her presence already had, anyway. She should probably do his mental health evaluation first; at least break a little ice. He seemed alert, awake, and oriented, well enough. “How would you characterize your mental state today?”

“Violent.”

“Hm.” She retrieved a notepad from her PD kit and started scribbling. Glancing up from the page a moment, she could see that her writing was irritating Obito further. Which cost him a few points in the “mood stability” category. Oops.

“Tell me a little about your sleep habits?” He rolled his eyes, and said nothing. This wasn’t likely to be a very productive session. She could already tell he was not going to be like her usual patients. He had been far more compliant when he was intubated and sedated.
Well. That was a bit cruel.

She was going to have to switch tack--protocol be hanged.

“I thought I’d share a little research with you,” she offered. "We’re calling your condition Sharingan psychosis. It seems apt, considering the emotional trauma that triggers the Sharingan's manifestation also leads to delusion, violence and altered perception. You all called it the ‘curse of hatred’. It’s essentially madness, but I figured it merited a more appropriate medical assessment than that. The strength of these delusions and the intensity of the behaviour has only increased through generations, likely due to the selective inbreeding for the Sharingan trait. Stronger eyes, weaker minds.”

Obito seemed to realize that she was specifically referring to himself and Sasuke, and looked annoyed at the suggestion. “So you’re saying that I’m so inbred I’m crazy.”

“Well, inbred, yes, we can’t exactly dispute concrete facts here, and ‘crazy’, possibly also, though I’d rather you called it a disorder; that way we can agree that therapy and possibly medication, if necessary, can have an impact. The earlier Uchiha, if my research has any bearing, were only occasionally this… affected. It seems to have intensified with every generation after Uchiha Madara.”

Obito’s nose wrinkled at the name. She couldn't imagine what his time with that twisted, legendary creature had been like. As with Sasuke-kun and Orochomaru, she wondered how much poison Obito had absorbed. “I’m not going to take medication,” he said with an air of finality.

“Then don’t give me a reason to prescribe it.” She countered. “Unfortunately, it’s not for you to decide. Your autonomy is pretty limited, Uchiha-san.”

He rolled his eyes again. “As you keep reminding me.” Who knew a megalomaniac could be so bitchy?

“Right,” she said. “I do need to conduct a physical exam on you too. I’ll do what I can to coordinate some behavioral therapy for you once I’ve left.”

Obito looked at her frostily. “If that’ll get you to leave. Those two have seen it all already.”

Sakura glanced back at the ANBU. Badger coughed. Mink wrung her hands.
He stood then, and Sakura was forced to as well. He was much taller than her. She shifted to the side and scooted back to give him space, slipping on a pair of exam gloves in the meantime. Obito’s hands came to his robe, hesitated for a moment, then loosened the belt. He shrugged his shoulders out of the sleeves and let the top half of the robe fall open. Sakura sucked in a breath. His neck was bruised, he had a newish, maybe month-old scar above one collarbone, and what looked like a human bite—*but deep*, still marring the skin but similarly healed over. The bruises on his neck were about a day old, and distinctly shaped like fingerprints. She could see mottled marks all down his torso and back. Big ones, deep and brutal-looking, on his hips. They were all different ages, some recent, some old and mostly healed, bilirubin breaking down to biliverdin, reds and purples turning to greens and yellows. They all stood out brightly on his creamy Uchiha skin and pallid prosthetic tissue like a watercolour painting. It looked as though Obito had lost more battles than he’d won. Worse, it seemed as though these battles weren’t necessarily pugilistic. Someone had gripped him by the hips. Someone had *punched him in the face*, and then...

And then those handprints went further down.

Obito’s cheeks were reddening, and he scowled at the wall, stance rigid and fists clenched. She could hear him breathing through his nose, a little more rapidly than she’d like.

This was not the picture she imagined. She hadn’t run any mental simulations for this. Who had done this to him?

Had *Kakashi-sensei* done it?

He couldn’t have.

But then why would Gai insist she visit while he was away on a mission?

“I—I’m going to listen to your heart, alright? Just stay still, please.” She swallowed thickly. She fumbled in her bag for her stethoscope, fit the earpieces and pressed the diaphragm to his chest. His rate was good, rhythm regular, lungs sounding clear over the steady lub-dub. She was about to withdraw when she caught a faint sound, almost like a growl… and it wasn’t a heart sound. Wasn’t a murmur. Forgetting her discomfort for a moment, she quickly pressed three fingertips to his chest and sent a probing pulse of chakra inward.

She mastered her response down to just a furrow of her eyebrow, but she made a million and one mental notes in that moment. *Shit, shit, shit.* Finally, she withdrew and cleared her throat. “Obito—
san… I’m going to have to check you below the waist as well. You can cover your chest and shoulders again, if you like.”

“If they step out. I’d rather at least the illusion of privacy.” His voice was tighter now, she could hear it. She looked back at the two ANBU, who hadn’t moved an inch. She gave them a decisive nod, even though she would miss their company. She could deal with this. She could. They disappeared instantly. The room was silent for a stretch, empty save for Obito’s peeved, too-fast breathing. “Fuck you for making me do this. Fuck Gai for tattling,” he hissed, quiet and venomous, just for Sakura to hear.

And despite herself, Sakura felt like a bit of a monster for witnessing this.

Obito lifted his robe slowly, and Sakura exhaled. Above his knees, Obito revealed a gradually darkening gradient of bruising, a series of shallow bites trailing up to his groin. “I’m sorry, truly,” she heard herself say. She couldn’t meet his eyes. “But I need to examine your… other side.” He said nothing, but walked woodenly back to the couch and lay down with his back to her. She reached the hem of his robe. “I’m going to have to--”

“--Just get on with it,” he snapped.

She obliged, and almost immediately wished she hadn’t. The bruising was worse here, handprints clearly delineated on both of his glutes. Then she had to look further still—to immediately have her fears confirmed. There were fissures she could see —no internal exam necessary. She wouldn’t probe further unless Obito had a complaint—at least in the medical arena, she would actively try to minimize harm. As gently as she could, she straightened his robe and covered him again. She peeled off her gloves and moved around to the side of the couch so she could catch his eye without making him turn again.

“Did you consent to this?” She asked, and she hated how small her voice sounded, how it shook at the end.

It was somehow more difficult to face him now. He looked back at her with awful baleful eyes and a strange, sour smile. “Of course. This is just what I wanted.” He made no effort to conceal his tone. He probably found it unnerving to be discussing this with a seventeen year old girl. She was extremely qualified, of course, but just now she couldn’t help but feel far too young for this. “Inside this apartment,” Obito went on, “He’s a different person.”

Those words of confirmation hit her like a punch to the gut.
“Outside of this apartment, much of the village wants you dead,” she countered automatically. Surely living was better? But even as she had that thought, she berated herself. She didn’t know the details here--she couldn’t say something like that for sure.

“Then your sensei is extremely selfish. Probably doesn’t have your best interests at heart.” He smiled wider, anything but pleasant.

She shifted the subject. Had to. “Would you consider some anti-inflammatory at least? An ointment? For… ah…” And here she knew she looked distinctly uncomfortable again, still struggling to reconcile these marks on Uchiha Obito’s body with the man she’d known as sensei for years now. Clinical bedside manner was just escaping her grasp at the moment.

He shook his head in silence.

Wringing her hands a little behind her back, she offered, “This is a safe space. Confidential. You may--”

“--No. I’ve got nothing more to say.” He cut her off, abruptly.

Sakura sighed, pursing her lips for a moment. She’d been trained for these eventualities… but she could have never been fully prepared for this. This was complicated. Dangerous, for both Obito and Kakashi-sensei.

The two ANBU returned to the room, likely sensing that the visit was nearing its end.

“Part of your sentence includes mandatory behavioral health rehabilitation. For now we’ll begin with therapy sessions; brief meetings for reflection and mental growth. I’ll be monitoring those reports and overseeing your general health. I’ll check in in another week or two. Just…” And she paused, amazed at herself for even feeling an ounce of compassion for a man who’d destroyed so much, “…Just try to take care of yourself, alright?”

Obito sighed, the sound becoming a groan as he lurched back into a sitting position. “Oh, but your sainted sensei’s been taking excellent care of me,” he said bitingy.
Sakura bit at her lips, her stomach doing an angry little backflip. Kakashi-sensei… what have you gotten caught up in? She made eye contact with Badger and Mink--barely distinguishing their eyes behind the ANBU masks. She saw the concern, clear enough. The worry. She could just about hear Badger’s teeth grinding. She wanted to ask, but they didn’t answer to her. Their observations were classified at a level that went over her head.

She left the apartment with a leaden feeling in her chest. That afternoon as she compiled her observations, she hesitated twice. She should be as accurate as possible when documenting a physical examination, but every last thing she had seen was damning, either for Kakashi-sensei, or for Obito himself. Obito hadn’t given a very clear story of what happened, but at the least Sakura had seen clear evidence of traumatic penetration, and proof enough, between Gai-sensei, the ANBU, and Obito, that her sensei had done it. Was it assault? Had Obito invited it? Could any interaction between prisoner and warden, regardless of their history, ever truly be considered consenting? This was a mess.

And in the cardiovascular exam section, Sakura lingered over the chakra reverberation comment. With that one chakra probe in the quiet of Kakashi’s living room, she detected something that had been impossible to catch in a noisy intensive care unit. At the core of Obito’s heart chakra was something other, something small but wild and seemingly bottomless. It felt like a sliver of eternity, or a snapshot of infinity. Just like that, she had solved the mystery of Obito’s survival. Naruto hadn’t fully extracted the Juubi. Obito was still, very infinitessimally, a jinchuuriki. His doujutsu was supposedly disabled, but she knew what she had felt today when he looked at her. Put together, well, perhaps they didn’t have Obito as neutered as they’d thought. She just prayed he didn’t know that.

She scribbled her findings into the progress note, objectively true but more vague than she (or the billing/coding ninja) would probably like. She’d have to relay the details directly to Tsunade-shishou first, and then figure out how to proceed.

Shit.
Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

Kakashi returns.

(These next chapters have a lot of NSFW plot advancement)

Obito nursed a cup of water with slow sips, sitting with his hips canted off to the side a bit for the sake of comfort. He sat under a blanket, flipping listlessly through a book of taijutsu kata. Damn Gai, and damn Haruno Sakura. Did they expect him to feel grateful for their intervention, he wondered. Gai had come by, probably intent on knocking him around to protect Kakashi’s ‘virtue’ or some such, only to turn around and bolt once he’d seen the state Obito was in. Kakashi’s former student prodded at his abused ass and questioned him as though he were a rape survivor, and not some reckless idiot who’d all but begged Kakashi to stick it in him. He’d imagined Kakashi would take at least a little more care, however. Maybe that punch in the face had distracted him, the fucker.

It was a very uncomfortable way to feel, cramping internally like he had a stomach bug, aching from the bruises he’d earned in the scuffle, and, worst, nursing this stinging ring of discomfort that wouldn’t let him so much as sit upright without red-hot pain. It didn’t leave him feeling particularly charitable.

It was just a matter of time before this got back to the Hokage, if she didn’t know already. Unlike Kakashi, apparently, Obito never forgot for a second that every gesture was being watched. Every fight, every… every fuck. And maybe the ANBU were staying tight-lipped, but there were far too many people involved now to think that nothing would leak. It was hard being the only one with two brain cells to rub together sometimes--and his still had skull fragments nestled between them.

This time, he had dragged himself to the shower after an uncomfortable and cold sleepless few hours on the floor. He’d made sure to use all of Kakashi’s hot water, then bundled himself up to read, and to think. He was glad for his decision; he could only imagine how much bigger of a scene Gai would’ve made to see blood and semen staining his legs. As it was, Kakashi was stuck with icy cold water before his mission, and dead silence as he headed out. It was just as well. Obito was in no shape to punch his skull in.

He turned the page and danced through old, familiar kata in his mind. His personal style preferred the well-grounded stance, swinging heavy kicks from a low center of gravity. He’d always liked to lure an opponent in with predictable motions, then throw in a surprise leg-lock or spinning hook kick. As he got older, he balanced his upper body strength to his legs, but he’d never been quite able to resist
those disabling blows he’d become good at. So much for fighting shape these days, though. He had been reduced to wild scrabbling and grappling. If he wasn’t planning to kill himself—or get conveniently killed—that would have to change, he decided. One-sided battles were hardly any fun. Especially on the losing end.

And he’d get right on that when he could walk and sit comfortably.

Kakashi returned in the early afternoon. At first, Obito caught a low murmur outside, probably the ANBU bringing him up to speed, then the door opened. Obito turned another page and ignored his entry. Kakashi said nothing at first, hovering in place like he expected Obito to acknowledge him. Or maybe attack him with an edged weapon. After a moment, he semed to give in and began to shuffle around the apartment, putting his things away.

Obito tried to ignore the fact that he was now reading the same paragraph repeatedly.

He heard a sigh from the kitchen area, and slowly approaching footsteps. Kakashi cleared his voice, then spoke up. “You had a physical today?”


He nodded once. “Oh. That’s good.” He didn’t sound happy.

Obito rolled his eyes, “It is, is it? You’ve really got some balls on you, you know that?”

“What are you talking about.” Kakashi was immediately guarded, narrowing his one visible eye.

Well, if he started, he wasn’t likely to stop. “As if you don’t know, you prick. Was I everything you ever dreamed of? How’d it feel, leaving me there to pick myself up off the floor? I still can’t sit comfortably, and forget using the toilet.”

“That voice was plaintive, tired. Obito didn’t give a damn.

He barreled on, voice increasing in volume. “She knows, you know. Your Sakura. She’s seen the marks you’ve left all over me. Actually asked me if I was ‘safe’, If I’d ‘consented’.” He didn't
mention Gai, still too interested in seeing how that particular detail would play out without any meddling from him.

Kakashi had the good sense to look devastated, gaze quickly dropping to the floor. He exhaled slowly. “...That wasn’t my intention.”

“What? To wreck my ass and throw my back out, or for your bubblegum pink protegée to see that you’d done it?” Obito lurched to his feet, getting up in Kakashi’s face despite the discomfort the movement caused.

Kakashi massaged his temples, dropped his head into his hands for a moment. Weaker. Weakening. “I don’t know. Both. Don’t be so vulgar.”

The man who mounted him on the floor like a dog, complaining about vulgarity. Incredible. Obito laughed, sharp and mirthless. “You still haven’t told me if it was good for you, you know. Did you like that? Holding me down and having your way? Was I tight enough for you?”

“I--”

“And did you chat with your cronies about it later?” Obito demanded, gesturing at the walls and air ducts that likely held those ANBU flunkies, four useless bodies who had seen everything and done exactly nothing. “‘Oh, you really got him good this time, Captain! Fuck the prisoner where I can see better, Captain!’”

"Don’t,” Kakashi grit out, leaning in and pulling himself back in several micro-movements. It was clear he had no idea what to do.

And Obito, massive masochist that he was, encouraged it. He licked his lower lip and flashed his teeth. He hooked a finger under the rim of Kakashi’s pants. He stepped around the coffee table and backed toward the nearby wall. “You can’t help yourself, can you?” he jeered as Kakashi followed him closely, relenting. He felt like a bit of a hypocrite saying so, but hell, he didn’t care right now.

“Tell me to stop, then,” Kakashi murmured. The please went unsaid, but it bent his words just so. He nosed at Obito’s neck, pressed him against the wall with both hands. He drew his mask down and tucked the fabric beneath his chin.
“We both know I’m not going to do that.” Obito parted his legs a fraction, challenging him. He told himself he was playing the whore again, intending to use Kakashi’s desire against him, working to gain control. The truth was that he liked it; liked being pressed against the wall, Kakashi’s lips and nose against the sensitive skin of his neck, the hot shuddering plume of helpless breath that followed. Though he ached all over, his cock was stirring to life, striving for contact. They were both such awful people.

Kakashi groaned softly in the back of his throat, and Obito grinned. Kakashi was faltering again, and Obito was determined to regain control. He wouldn’t feel used like that again.

He could smell grass and dirt and sweat on Kakashi’s skin, so close that the scent surrounded him. Kakashi’s hips rocked against his, once, twice, and then his hands moved downward. Obito arched into the touch as Kakashi’s hands delved inside his robe, fingertips brushing skin and scars, thumbs ghosting over his nipples. There was a difference, he realized, between his left side and his right side as his skin awoke with arousal. Goosebumps bloomed readily on his native skin as it awoke to the touch. It became more sensitive as Kakashi’s fingertips explored carefully. In contrast, his prosthetic tissue felt things more dully, adopting a fuzzy, diffuse sort of heat instead. Obito contemplated the dichotomy as best he could, given the circumstances.

Obito didn’t believe Kakashi meant to touch him so sensually, but it felt good. Different. And in the back of his mind he balked; why was he allowing this so passively? He was still so sore, raw from their last encounter—there was no way he could tolerate anything like that again if that was where things were headed.

Kakashi’s lips parted, baring the subtly pointed tips of his canines. “Stay still,” he ordered.

Obito frowned, but didn’t make a move.

Kakashi sank to his knees fluidly, kneeling before him with this look of pure determination.

“What are--” Kakashi untied Obito’s belt and pushed the robe open, exposing his entire front. “Ah.” Obito’s body responded with immediate interest. This was different. With curious fingers, Kakashi traced the flat plane of Obito’s abdomen, the touches converging downward along the line of his obliques.

“Your ANBU will have plenty to say about this, I’ll bet,” Obito commented thoughtfully.
Kakashi withdrew sharply, and looked up at Obito. His lips curled back from his teeth in a slow snarl. “It’s in your best interest to shut up now.” He moved in again, flashing those sharp canines once more, this time right alongside Obito’s shaft in an obvious threat. “Got it?”

Obito swallowed around a dry throat. Fine. “Mm.” Let him keep up the charade. Pretend this power play wasn’t shifting like quicksand.

Kakashi took his sweet time at first, leaning in close enough to nose at the wiry hairs. Obito watched, rapt, as Kakashi breathed deep, nostrils flaring. It was a little strange to witness, intense and very animal. A brief glance further down showed him that Kakashi was fully hard already in his pants. Kakashi gripped him around the base, and drew back to drag the flat of his tongue over the crown.

“--!!” The visual was downright pornographic, and just that first touch drew a woefully incoherent noise from Obito’s throat. Add this to the list of unexpected firsts.

He saw Kakashi sway on his knees, just a little, as if that one taste had him drunk and reeling. But that couldn’t be what--

Then, just like that, Kakashi’s lips parted wide and he plunged down on Obito’s cock. Obito’s hips twitched and he bit out a curse. This was--Kakashi’s mouth was hot, slick, and ravenous. He took Obito deep, jerking back just a little when he gagged involuntarily. He frowned, for a moment just seeming affronted by it, before squaring his shoulders and resuming the act, pulling back fractionally and making up the difference with his hand. It took a few strokes to find a rhythm, but Obito was more than happy to watch him try. Seeing his cock disappear into that mouth was entrancing. It looked nearly as good as it felt. Kakashi’s tongue cradled the underside of Obito’s cock, adding to the snug, delightful grip his mouth had on it.

What are you doing?

With a mix of desire and spite, Obito reached down and grabbed Kakashi’s hair. Kakashi gave a sharp inhale through his nose, but he allowed it--more than allowed; once Obito did that, Kakashi’s free hand slipped quickly between his legs, kneading at the straining bulge there. Like he liked it. Like this was doing it for him. Obito didn’t imagine he’d last long like this. Kakashi never spared him a break once he’d found a rhythm, and now he was quick and voracious, the air coming alive with wet, lewd noise. Obito swore again, louder this time, tugging at the silver strands convulsively. Kakashi backed off the rhythm for a moment, pulling back until his lips just barely brushed Obito’s glans. He looked up at Obito again, flushed and glassy-eyed, mouth looking like the very embodiment of sin. “Shhh,” he whispered hoarsely, and those ivory points appeared one last time as warning. When Obito remained quiet (and really, it took biting down on his own knuckles to manage it), Kakashi went back to work. Obito wondered at the dedication Kakashi was exhibiting. What was he angling for?
Oh.

*This is you apologizing, isn’t it?*

Hah. Ha ha ha.

Getting one’s cock sucked really did muddle the mind. It had quickly gotten so hard to think. Kakashi had applied himself to the task with impressive passion, and he was certainly getting results. Obito bit a little harder into his knuckle; Kakashi faltered on rhythm now, but his grip tightened. Obito felt that now-familiar pressure mounting rapidly. *Do I tell him I’m close?* he wondered, breathing harsh though his nostrils. But then he remembered—*He didn’t say a word when he tore me open. Fuck him.* Ah, and just like that, there it was—his abdomen flexed hard and he finished with a short cry, pulsing into Kakashi’s mouth in heavy torrents.

To his credit Kakashi initially swallowed twice in quick succession, but then he coughed as it became too much for him. He pulled back, limited by Obito’s grip, and a small trickle escaped the corner of his mouth. He trembled stiffly for a moment, grinding hard against his palm and grunting as he came. He leaned back in immediately to suckle at Obito’s softening member, breathing shakily through the shocks of his own release. He pulled back just before Obito became too sensitive to tolerate any more, then he turned just slightly to the side, resting his sweat-damp brow against Obito’s leg.

Silence reigned for a few long moments as they caught their breath, Obito still hazily amazed to see Kakashi on his knees before him like this, head bowed, a few pearly droplets gathered upon his chin. This felt like a game changer. A concession he intended to take as far as he possibly could.

“Hey,” he prompted, “If you’re ever going to *try* fucking me again, do a better job of it or I will cut off something you’ll miss.” Incredibly magnanimous of him, but Obito apparently became quite generous after getting head. At his words, something sparked in Kakashi’s eyes, which had dulled in the heady haziness of *after*. His hair was still gripped tightly between Obito’s fingers, so Obito could feel it fully when he nodded. Looking down, he could see Kakashi lick swollen, slick lips and flutter his eyes shut, as though savouring the taste of him. Not a bad visual at all.

“Alright,” was whispered then, barely audible breath against Obito’s thigh.

*You liked that*, Obito thought wonderingly. *Interesting.*
Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Expectations met and not met.

Winter wore on steadily, with snow relentlessly piling up outside as the weeks passed. The sounds of the streets became muffled, and the small apartment felt more claustrophobic than ever. Obito took to looking out the kitchen window, observing the grid and the nearby alleys. He came to know the flow of certain pedestrians, memorized the tracks they made in the heavy snow. It appeared to be a hard winter; the street corners were piled up to waist height or higher--teams of genin and academy students roamed the streets armed with shovels, tasked with clearing the roadways. He could see the Hokage monument off in the distance, nearly indistinguishable in its shroud of white.

Inside his bizarre confinement, very little had changed. Despite the fact that Gai and Sakura had barged their way into the mix, Kakashi hadn’t yet been confronted--at least insofar as Obito could tell, and Obito had not yet been carted off to the stocks. It still felt like some doom was hovering over his shoulder, however, waiting just out of view. There was little choice but to move forward into the uncertain fog that was his future, waiting for the other shoe to drop.

He was, apparently, being monitored closely--though he rarely saw any indication that that was the case. It was precisely because he couldn’t see them watching that Obito could will himself to forget that they were there. In the throes of--he didn’t know what to call it exactly; passion seemed too flowery a word… Fucking around, he supposed, was most accurate--in the throes of fucking around with Kakashi, his awareness shifted. When he let himself get lost in the heat of lust, he didn’t feel quite so exposed.

Naturally, therefore, he sought it out as much as possible. He’d disposed of what little shame he still felt--it was a particularly useless emotion, as he saw it; little more than a way to control people’s behaviour. He’d been used as a pawn for the bulk of his life: as a scion of his clan, as a child soldier of his village, as the damaged puppet of a madman. He may have been caged for the moment, but he would not be controlled any longer.

Kakashi had everything to lose, after all, whereas Obito had absolutely nothing left. As a result, it was easy enough to let Kakashi ‘apologize’ to him--not in so many words of course--as often as he liked. Which was often. His younger years had been woefully stunted in regard to sexual contact, or really human contact of any kind. Even when he’d taken up with Konan, they had perhaps met up two or three times a week. Now it was more like a few times a day. It was fascinating that this could go on under the ANBU’s supposedly watchful eyes, over and over, and Kakashi would still move forward with it recklessly, as though he had a point to prove. Or as though he had no other choice.
It often began with something very simple, like Kakashi puttering in the kitchen, loading the rice cooker. Right afterward Obito would see him come wandering over with eyes that were tempestuous and frustrated, but lacking the hesitation of earlier days. He’d nudge into Obito’s personal space and run a hand between his legs with clear, though unspoken, intent. Despite the high demand being put on his rather battered thirty-two year old body (a birthday had indeed come and gone, and he’d only noted it a week or two after the fact), Obito found that he could respond every single time. Really, it only seemed to get better with the repetition. The discomfort of early arousal was now a forgotten thing of the past. He would find himself ravenously consuming his dinner afterward, thrumming with endorphins, already anticipating the next time. His appetite--and tolerance for food--had increased substantially, and his body thanked him for it, steadily gaining back the composition he’d lost.

Obito exercised, too, especially when Kakashi was away. While he lacked for equipment, he still had the means to push himself through increasingly challenging bodyweight exercises, up to twice a day if he could tolerate it. He relished the burning, ultra-slow repetitions of pushups, lunges, crunches, which were gradually working some power back into his body. When he struggled, as he often did, he thought back to his youth--to his time in the cave, trying to get used to new synthetic limbs. He had done that, rehabilitated himself to functionality after a devastating injury. He could certainly do this. When he looked at himself in the mirror now, he was pleased to see muscle slowly building up under his skin once more. In spite of everything, he was beginning to feel like himself again.

Kakashi, meanwhile, was awful at pretending to think of anything else while he was in the apartment with Obito. He would watch him eat, drink, sleep, and move with poorly disguised interest, and his gaze would cling to any glimpse of the bite, wander guiltily down to Obito’s rear. Obito was aware, of course, and anything but complacent with that knowledge. He wanted control, however he could get it, a few words of defiance, an appraising arch of the brow, and Kakashi would be there, with his hands, with his mouth (and what a mouth), working him with steadily improving skill.

And so finding him now, like this, clad in just a towel and assessing himself in the mirror after a hard workout, was just about as predictable as Kakashi could get. Obito caught his reflection over his shoulder and made a show of sighing. “That time again, is it?”

“I don’t know what you mean,” Kakashi muttered from the doorway, leaning against the doorframe. Obito rolled his eyes.

“I’m about to take a shower,” Obito said, more as a statement of fact than an invitation, though the invitation was still implicit in the pitch and cadence of his voice. He turned to face Kakashi and shed the towel, exposing himself fully. When Kakashi sucked in a sharp breath, Obito knew his volley had landed. He turned on his heel and entered the shower. He turned on the water. Mentally, he counted down: three, two, o--
And Kakashi was right there, lingering right next to the shower basin, no more than a few inches away. Obito chuckled and shook his head. “Come here. I know you want to.”

“I shouldn’t.”

Obito scoffed and lathered up the washcloth with heavy suds, barely sparing Kakashi a glance as he started to wash his chest. Kakashi shouldn’t have done a great many things. That ship had long since sailed. “But you’re going to,” he declared. “You’re going to get in here and wash my back.” Kakashi’s stare was already fixed below Obito’s waist, so he didn’t see Obito smirk knowingly as he turned the water a few degrees warmer. This relatively lighthearted exchange seemed almost too familiar, but perhaps that was for the best. He wanted Kakashi to feel comfortable. Comfortable meant off his guard. Comfortable meant he would eventually make a mistake.

“Obito, no. Just get done with the shower, alright?”

He didn’t appreciate the resistance, and he laughed unkindly. “That’s your hard limit? That’s where you draw the line? By the sage. Take a good look, then.” Obito moved down his front with the washcloth, taking his sweet time and making a bit of a show of it. He grew hard easily under the warm water, and under Kakashi’s hotter gaze. He may have been the one doing the manipulating, but it would be a lie to suggest he wasn’t getting a little caught up in it as well. He’d already grown tired of the charade. What he wanted at this point--it wasn’t about to wait.

He caught Kakashi’s eye. “Either I bathe myself, or you bathe me, wasn’t that the line? Here, catch-” Obito tossed him the soapy washcloth. Kakashi caught it on reflex, though a few suds slopped across his chest and cheek.

He blinked.

Obito turned in a carefully crafted display of vulnerability and presented his back to Kakashi. “Wash my back. It’s fine. You’re not in the shower with me, are you?”

Kakashi grumbled, but half a second later Obito felt the warm cloth on his back again, stroking and scrubbing from his neck downward. Obito smiled to himself as he felt Kakashi’s free hand come to rest on hip, ostensibly to stabilize him, though he noted the stroke of a thumb over his hipbone. He heard Kakashi sigh behind him as the washcloth descended further, attending to his low back before circling, almost reverently, over the muscle of his ass. Just as he registered that touch, Obito was struck with the real, sudden desire to try again. Kakashi’s attentions had kindled a feeling low in his belly--curiosity and the same vicious hunger that had teased him before. He wanted the invasion. He wanted to finally know what his desire meant. He had to know if it could possibly mean anything
He looked back and saw that Kakashi looked apprehensive, as though ashamed of himself for wanting. If he had any sense he probably was, given how their last time had gone. Since then he’d avoided the area altogether. Now, however, his touch was lingering, the temptation obviously getting the better of him. Obito found he enjoyed the attention. He bit his lip and pressed back into Kakashi’s hands. He’d said next time, hadn’t he? He was healed—it had only taken a few days, really, but Obito had relished Kakashi’s poorly disguised attempts to appease him after what he’d done. He’d been fine with drawing them out.

“Very professional,” he sniped. Kakashi’s grip tightened on his bottom. Obito huffed out a little chuckle. “You want it, don’t you? Of course you do.”

Kakashi pulled back a second—Obito wasn’t sure if this was denial (what was the point), or uncertainty (again, the point?), or--

He heard the washcloth fall to the ground, followed by the heavier thud of Kakashi’s flak jacket.

Kakashi leaned in, still half dressed, undershirt sticking to his chest in the water. Obito could hear droplets hit the floor and glanced back to see Kakashi’s feet still stubbornly planted on the tile outside the tub. He would have scoffed, but Kakashi was slipping his hand into the cleft of his rear, angling oh-so-slowly for--

Hm. Obito bent forward a fraction more, helping that hand along. “--Do you have anything--” Obito asked, swiveling a little to regard Kakashi—seeing some of the hair that framed his face now sticking wetly against it, strands of silver darkening to pewter. He saw how Kakashi looked at him, the rapt attention he was paying. He pulled down his mask to reveal a curious expression, part arousal and part determination, and Obito knew they were finally in business.

“Some weapons oil, I think--Obito--”

Ugh, the way he said his name. Something about it made him more eager for it—eager to feel him again. “Shut up.”

Kakashi didn’t ask “are you sure”, but his eyes were a question, his touch slower, more careful this time. He reached one dripping hand for his flak jacket and retrieved the oil. He coated his index and middle finger liberally, then bent to the task.
Obito wet his lips and swallowed, watching him over his shoulder. He felt one finger probe at his entrance gently, slipping inside easily and circling his rim. Nothing hurt or stung anymore. That was good. And the slow, subtle in-and-out of it felt... “Ahh--” This was much, much better.

Kakashi added a second finger, and with the oil Obito found that went easily as well. He couldn't help a frisson of relief at that. He was determined to chase this feeling and understand it, to master it so he could regain some control in this strange entanglement. If he could do that, perhaps he'd be able to capitalize on an opportunity later.

To do what, though? Kill Kakashi?

He hadn’t decided.

He probably wouldn’t be able to get away with it. Worse, he wasn’t so sure he wanted to kill him. Torment him, perhaps. The pattern they had fallen into was how he measured his days at this point. There wouldn’t be much left without it.

He shook himself mentally. Why was he wasting mental energy on aimless pondering when the intrusion behind him was now flirting with the edge of something that felt amazing? “More,” he hissed, pressing against Kakashi’s fingers. His cheeks were burning but his jaw was set with determination. “Just--c’mon,” he urged; he couldn’t say please yet, couldn’t actually beg him with words, but he lifted his hips a little to increase the pressure inside. And that forced a moan from his throat he hadn’t anticipated.

“Demanding,” Kakashi commented, though the rough edge in his voice suggested that wasn’t the worst possible thing.

A third finger joined, and Obito gasped, the stretched sensation suffusing him completely. Kakashi nudged the slicked digits in and out in shallower passes and Obito’s head hung heavily between his outstretched arms, water dripping down his nose and chin. He wasn’t doing a thing but he’d begun to pant as though he’d been running. Kakashi got bolder with his fingers, pushing in just that touch deeper, when Obito felt it.

His head shot up and he cursed. His fingers and toes curled, and his back shivered. A wave of intense sensation seemed to burst forth from the core of him, making his cock jerk. He exhaled a tremulous breath and glanced back at Kakashi almost accusatorily. what did you just do?!
What he saw was a look of—was it wonder?—stealing across Kakashi’s features. Some rapt
fascination at his reaction. He looked as though he had a million questions and couldn’t find the
words to ask them. He pressed in again, and Obito groaned and rocked back against him, swiveling
his hips this way and that to let Kakashi’s bony knuckles enter. The pressure increased against his
prostate, sharp and amazing, and Obito’s cock spasmed again. Looking down at himself he could see
clear fluid beading at the tip, sliding down his shaft before the water washed it away.

“Stay there,” Obito managed hoarsely, resenting the desperate edge that coloured his voice. This was
good, better than expected. He felt a pulsing warmth building in his entire pelvis, bringing his cock
along for the ride almost like an afterthought. His entire lower half was buzzing with heat. “Fuck,
that feels… Ah!” Well. He liked it. Really fucking enjoyed it.

He could see Kakashi’s lips turn up slightly at the corners as if in amazement at the effect he was
having. Take a good look, Obito willed him, watch me. His torso dipped a little more, and he pressed
back onto Kakashi’s fingers harder, took them a fraction deeper. If he kept his mind on the task, if he
breathed carefully, he could relax and allow his body to let them in. He wondered if Kakashi liked
what he was seeing. He gave those fingers a squeeze.

He heard Kakashi hiss to himself, leaning closer, until his feet landed in the shower basin with a
splash. He’d stepped in, clothes and all, and still kept his fingers up Obito’s ass. Obito heard his fly
unzip. Just that sound sent more blood pounding to his cock. It was going to happen. He was about
to--

There was the squelch of lubricant, muffled amid the falling water, and then the press of something
heavy behind him as the fingers withdrew and Kakashi’s cock eased in a fraction—not deep enough
yet, not by half. He could hear the hitch in Kakashi’s breathing, the hint of a growl at the back of his
throat.

“Don’t worry,” Obito panted, “You’re still completely in control.” I’m ready—do it, do it, do it now.

“Stop talking,” Kakashi grit out, pushing in deep—and this time Obito took him in fully, groaning as
he was slowly, inexorably penetrated. The stretch was notable, still burning just slightly, but the
heavy, full, warm feeling overrode it. He took him to the hilt with a soft curse, fingertips curling into
the grout. Kakashi groaned too, and despite the steam of the shower, Obito could feel the warmth of
his breath against his skin.

Kakashi drew back a little, then thrust back in—and this time they cried out in unison, leaving Obito
thinking simply fuck yes, this is how it’s supposed to be. There was a subtle edge of pain to it that
kept it interesting, made it feel like a challenge. But that fullness spoke to him, the steady repeated
probing of his innards felt good, felt right. He could take Kakashi, take the entire length of him, and like it. Handle it. Get better at it. Own it. And he would. He’d do it over and over if it felt like this.

Kakashi’s hand slipped forward to grip Obito around the base, and his body inched in flush against Obito’s back, lifting him slightly more upright and pressing wet fabric against him along his back, buttocks, and legs. He could feel the zipper of Kakashi’s fly digging in just a bit, a little discomfort as counterpoint to the sure, steady stroke on his shaft. Within a few movements, they’d hit a rhythm that seemed to work for them both, a powerful undulation that had Obito baring his teeth in savage delight, climbing toward a different kind of pleasure than he’d ever known.

He was half out of his head by the time Kakashi’s lips touched that bite mark, and unthinkingly he leaned his head to the side to allow him access. And in that second it was over; Kakashi bit down directly on the scar of his original trespass.

Oh.

His mind went blissfully blank. It was suddenly impossible to form a clear thought; as if the entire lexicon of words and phrases was stolen cleanly from his brain. He knew the rhythm of the act, the stretch and burn inside, the satisfying sense of fullness, and little more. He could now only manage a low whine, wordless encouragement. His head arched back, lolling against Kakashi’s shoulder and he pressed his hands against the tile—in doing so, the angle changed. Obito felt Kakashi’s weight lean into him even more, angling a little deeper as Obito lifted his hips in answer.

Oh, yes, there it was.

That brilliant node at his core lit up again, triggering a wave of powerful pleasure that shocked him with its intensity. His legs began to tremble. And then Kakashi hit it again, and again. The sensation built in layers almost, climbing higher with every pass, and Obito’s entire being was borne along with it. He moaned louder, heedless of the rising volume of his voice. This was—oh, he felt alive like this. He could feel his pulse just under his skin, his spine bowing of its own accord. He was so, so hard, somehow deeply feeling every inch of his body and floating deliriously above the situation like the steam that surrounded them. His only anchor was the hard thing inside him, Kakashi rutting against him, pumping his hand faster and faster, and he was alright with that. There was a fog over everything, thicker than the billowing steam, and he just breathed and felt, felt, felt.

He felt possessed, not of his own body, and owned, that force behind him soothing and claiming, and…

And.
Obito cried out, sharp and long, body shuddering through an orgasm stronger and deeper than anything he’d yet known. He was falling, falling—but held in place still, by a firm hand on his hip. By Kakashi’s body, stiff and trembling behind him, flooding him with heat inside.

The hot water ran out, and Obito came back to himself with a jolt. And realized he’d let Kakashi do it again, take the little sliver of power he’d been cultivating and turn it against him in an instant. That bite had ripped his agency away. He tensed under the tepid spray that was rapidly turning cold. He pulled his body closer to the tile, and felt Kakashi slip out from inside him. The hand on his hip lingered.

“Are you alright?” Kakashi asked, still breathless.

The concern rankled, and Obito sneered at the wall. So you care, is that it? Can’t let me die, now you’re trying to do me right? Fuck you. “Just fine,” he lied, steely resolve settling into his spine, “Thanks for that.”

That hand stroked down his leg in a parting touch that was altogether too familiar.

Kakashi stepped out of the shower, clothing dripping onto the floor. He plucked at the wet garment with a soft, rueful little chuckle, and peeled it off as he made his way out the door.

Obito turned off the water and stayed in place, forcing down the unnatural sense of distress that suffused him as Kakashi got further away. This wasn’t him. Those weren’t his feelings. This wasn’t… this was not what he wanted. He felt like any control he had over the situation evaporated the instant those teeth touched his skin.

He stepped out of the shower and toweled himself off aggressively, realizing with a groan that he’d left his robe on the couch. Setting his jaw, he walked back over to the living room with his body bare, that feeling of deprivation rapidly transforming into a promise in his mind. He’d change this. He’d engage in this on his own terms.

Freshly changed, Kakashi exited his room, eyes trained on Obito’s body with curiosity. Obito glanced at him archly and shrugged the robe back over his shoulders. He could still feel the phantom presence of Kakashi inside him.

What was the bite, really--why did it change things so much?
Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

Kakashi makes a miscalculation.

“You’ve put on ten pounds,” Haruno remarked, a pleased note to her voice. “You’re looking a good deal healthier.”

Obito looked down at her as she pinched some skin between a pair of metal calipers and scrutinized his torso. “I’m tolerating food better,” he allowed. He glanced over his shoulder at Kakashi who lingered by the kitchen counter, watching from a presumably safe distance. “I’m tolerating quite a few things better,” he added deliberately, smirking a little as he heard Kakashi inhale.

The girl’s eyes darted over to Kakashi at the sound, and Obito swore she made him shrink a little. “I see,” she commented lightly, lips drawing a little tighter in spite of her tone. She pushed his robe open just a little more, revealing fresh bruises in the shape of fingers, scattered over the crest of his hips. Obito licked his lips and shrugged. Her pink eyebrows drew inward a bit.

“Excuse me,” Kakashi muttered, pushing off from the wall and walking back toward his room.

When they heard Kakashi’s bedroom door click shut, Haruno looked up at him, an almost endearingly earnest expression on her face. “Are you really okay?” she asked, voice pitched to a low whisper. As if Kakashi couldn’t hear them in this small space.

“Are you asking because you care?” Obito replied in a normal voice, unconcerned with his voice carrying.

“Professional courtesy,” she replied glibly, securing his robe closed again with a few brisk movements.

“Mm,” Obito murmured. “He hates that you know about it.”

She coughed, uncomfortable. “Anyway. Your therapy sessions should be starting soon. The arrangements are just being finalized.”
“You said that three weeks ago.”

“It was difficult to find a willing volunteer to carry out your care.” She straightened up. “You look to be in better condition overall.”

“Considering,” he amended with a wry twist to his lips. Strange, to be thankful for something as mundane as weapons oil.

She sighed heavily. “Yes, ‘considering’. Excuse me.”

She stepped away from him gingerly and headed down the hall toward Kakashi’s room at a brisk clip. Obito sat back against the couch—which dearly needed a cleaning still—and tapped his foot idly. He heard her ask Kakashi outside to talk.

_Therapy._ Obito scoffed to himself. Yet another pointless gesture. What were they hoping to accomplish? They couldn’t brainwash him back to Konoha’s mindless ideology, not if they tried for a thousand years. He’d seen far too much, had his eyes opened too harshly and brutally as a boy. What good was a will of fire if that very idea, nurturing the younger generation, turned into cycle after cycle of child soldiers fighting the front lines of a corrupt nation’s war? Where were the daimyos? Those sick fucks had endorsed the slaughter of twelve-year-old kids. They sat fat on their thrones far from the ninja villages, now that Obito wasn’t either killing them or actively engineering a world free of their greed and perversion. What could therapy possibly teach him that would pull the scales back over his eyes?

Knowing better was a burden.

Seeing the world for what it truly was was a poison.

What was worth a damn in a world where a little girl felt obligated to kill herself at the hands of the boy she loved, sacrificing everything for a village that was ultimately indifferent? That simply recruited new children to replace the dead ones and taught them that this was the only way to live—worse, that it was a _commendable_ way to live?

This was a world in which a hardened criminal, evil incarnate by anyone’s account, could be made to live on and watch time march forward, gradually losing his edge and his fury because he’d discovered the pleasure of a cock in the ass.
How was he settling for this? He’d assured himself so many times over that he was biding his time, but who waited like this? Where was the control in letting Kakashi fuck him—in enjoying it loudly?

Maybe he’d talk to the therapists about that. So dissect this with me; up until now I’ve been satisfied enough fucking women once every five years or so, but just yesterday I offered my ass up to a man I despise because he looked at me the right way. And I loved it. More than anything I’ve done before. Psychoanalyze that.

At least that would probably cut the session short.

Sakura and Kakashi walked through the living room on their way to the front door. They each glanced his way at different times before exiting. Almost immediately after the door shut, he could hear Sakura’s voice rise, and Kakashi’s voice cutting in to quiet her down. His tone was tired, resigned. Obito strained his ears but couldn’t make out any words. Sakura said one last thing and he could hear her walk off, steps hurried.

Kakashi came back in then, and Obito looked up to him with a raised brow.

“She doesn’t approve,” Obito commented. “I hope she told you off.”

Kakashi shot him a warning look, one that quickly faded into something different—a mix of pained and contemplative. Obito wasn’t sure what to make of it.

“What do you all make of it?” he asked, looking to the ceiling and addressing the omnipresent ANBU force sardonically. “I hope they’re paying you good money.”

Of course, he got no reply. He rolled his eyes and made a slow show of undoing the belt of his robe. “Come on, then,” he said to Kakashi. “I’m sure you were very eager for her to leave.”

Kakashi’s lips tightened. His whole posture contracted a fraction, tense like he was about to attack, or help tear Obito’s clothing off. Neither happened. He exhaled long and slow, shook his head and told Obito to shut up for the umpteenth time.

Surprisingly enough, Kakashi did manage to pry himself away from Obito. Obito hated himself a
little for feeling vaguely disappointed. He headed to the kitchen to reheat a leftover bowl of rice. He heard the bathroom door, the rustle of Kakashi moving around, and the shower turning on. He thought of how he’d felt in that shower and all the times since that he’d allowed Kakashi to pry him open for convenient use.

You’re on borrowed time here, Obito thought. You know it, too.

He picked at the bowl of rice idly, eating about a quarter of it with too much soy sauce. He tossed the rest in the garbage, bowl and all, heedless of the waste.

The shower was still running. It had been almost twenty minutes. It probably would have been wise to have a little suspicion, but Obito didn’t care enough to bother. He was angry enough with himself that he’d come to know how long Kakashi’s average shower took. He flung one chopstick into the sink, and one behind the TV in the living room. It was a little petty, but nothing he was above doing. Kakashi liked things in their proper place. Obito didn’t consider himself to be in the right place, and one of his personal missions was to make sure that was never forgotten.

The water ran for another five minutes, then turned off. He listened to Kakashi milling about back there for another few minutes before giving up in disinterest. Obito shuffled back to the living room and cleared some space to exercise in. He began to slide through his old familiar katas, happy (for a certain definition of the word) to be regaining balance and functional strength. He could hold a fully extended kick midair for a solid minute on each leg again, which was far below ninja standard but better than most civilians. His punches came faster and faster, finally quick enough to audibly cut the air with each strike. He lunged, twisted, blocked, gradually regaining his sense of space, the balance of his body. He’d worked up a thin sheen of sweat, and was breathing a little harder as he wound down and began to stretch. At least one punch didn’t wind him as it had before. Obito had had more than his fair share of debility, and if he was going to be alive, at least he would ensure he was as able-bodied as possible. He took a few sips of water from the tap in the kitchen and splashed a little on his face.

He smelled Kakashi before he heard him for once, his nose registering minty shampoo a moment before his left arm was tugged behind his back. He stilled, finally having learned better than to try to fight on equal terms with Kakashi. “What is it,” he asked in a flat, resigned tone. That got his right arm similarly immobilized. Kakashi was being relatively gentle with him, he supposed, but the threat of violence still lingered.

“Come with me,” Kakashi said behind him, probably aiming for a neutral tone and coming up just short of it.

Obito sighed. He didn’t have much say in the matter, did he? Kakashi steered him away from the counter and pushed him down the hall. Obito began to bear left, assuming they were headed to the
bathroom yet again, but Kakashi walked him past that door and turned right at the end of the hall: his room.

*What are you doing?*

Kakashi nudged his room door open with one foot, hands maintaining a sure grip on Obito’s wrists.

“What are you doing?” Obito asked, aloud this time.

“Don’t ask questions,” Kakashi said, “and don’t give me any trouble please, Obito.” As though he had a right to ask, the man who was disrupting Obito’s relatively good day for *this*, whatever it was. They passed the threshold into Kakashi’s room, and Obito instinctively began to look around, assessing the space for threats, for escape routes.

What his eyes landed on immediately was a disconcerting memento from his distant past. The comforter laid out at perfect right angles upon Kakashi’s bed was achingly familiar—one Obito himself used to curl up in to ward off the winter’s chill, or to hide from monsters, both imagined and real. *That was mine*, Obito thought, still alarmed, with memories striking him from a lifetime and a half ago. He used to trace those shuriken patterns with his fingertips as a small boy, envisioning them made of real steel, flying straight and true from his hands in the midst of a great battle.

How in the world had Kakashi come by it? How many years had he slept under Obito’s old blanket? More importantly, what did that *mean* for the new context they found themselves in?

As he was forced forward, Obito tore his eyes away from the familiar blanket to continue looking around. Kakashi’s bedroom, at least, was marginally more interesting than the rest of the apartment. Despite the thick shadow of the evening, Obito could see a lopsided plant, numerous bookshelves, and a smallish bed for a grown man, a few photographs—trashy romance novels wedged amidst serious books on ninjutsu and battle strategy. Then he glimpsed the picture of his team, and his eyes clung hungrily to Rin’s face, cast in blue and washed of colour in the dimness. He hadn’t seen her features except in his mind’s eye for so long—and his photographic Sharingan memories of her were dark, violent things. He stopped for a moment, re-remembering the curve of her jaw, the crystalline perfection of her smile. It seemed wrong to have her bear witness to this… whatever was coming next.

“How in the world had Kakashi come by it? How many years had he slept under Obito’s old blanket? More importantly, what did that *mean* for the new context they found themselves in?”

As he was forced forward, Obito tore his eyes away from the familiar blanket to continue looking around. Kakashi’s bedroom, at least, was marginally more interesting than the rest of the apartment. Despite the thick shadow of the evening, Obito could see a lopsided plant, numerous bookshelves, and a smallish bed for a grown man, a few photographs—trashy romance novels wedged amidst serious books on ninjutsu and battle strategy. Then he glimpsed the picture of his team, and his eyes clung hungrily to Rin’s face, cast in blue and washed of colour in the dimness. He hadn’t seen her features except in his mind’s eye for so long—and his photographic Sharingan memories of her were dark, violent things. He stopped for a moment, re-remembering the curve of her jaw, the crystalline perfection of her smile. It seemed wrong to have her bear witness to this… whatever was coming next.

“Sit,” Kakashi bid him, indicating the edge of the bed. Obito turned warily, hands set free for just a moment. The comforter was the same shade of green, like time hadn’t gotten around to fading it. He sat on the bed—which was softer than he’d expected Hatake Kakashi’s bed to be—and took Kakashi in properly for the first time.
Kakashi was wearing a robe like his, looking a little rumpled. That clean mint scent still lingered on his skin. Obito could pick it up easily with the two feet of distance between them. He looked at Obito and said nothing, weight shifting slightly as he stood. He was hesitating. His legs were bare, feet bare upon the bedroom floor. And Obito wondered--what was there beneath that robe? Anything at all? Kakashi had always been so careful to keep his clothing on, to keep some distance between them even when Obito was laid fully bare. To keep it impersonal. Obito knew all about that mentality. It was exactly how he used to handle prostitutes.

But this was personal, wasn’t it? They were inside Kakashi’s inner sanctum, on Obito’s childhood bedding. There was less clothing in the way already.

Kakashi took a deep breath, inhaling and exhaling as Obito looked on. Then he leaned in close--Obito scooted back--until his arms bracketed Obito’s body. Kakashi was still warm from the shower, and Obito could feel the radiant heat against his skin, urging him against the mattress. He eased back against the bed, with some trepidation as that seemed to be what Kakashi was angling for. Kakashi turned him lengthwise, peeled his robe open and off his arms. Obito complied rigidly. He hated being on his back, hated pressure bearing down from above. However, he was in uncharted territory here, and careful observation would probably serve him better than another fight.

That resolution was immediately tested, however, by what Kakashi did next. Obito’s hands were pinned above his head, and he felt the slip of coarse nylon wind quickly around his wrists. Before he could so much as exclaim, Kakashi had completed several passes and finished the tie. Obito looked up and back incredulously, realizing he was bound to a metal chain that had been wound up from beneath the bed. He surreptitiously tested the restraint. Without a jutsu or some sharp edge, it would hold.

“What, don’t you trust me?” Obito asked sarcastically as the knots were pulled tight.

Kakashi merely gave him a long look and fished three kunai from beneath his pillow. Obito eyed them warily as they passed near his neck and chest, but Kakashi got off the bed and quickly placed them somewhere inside his closet. It was not as reassuring of a gesture as he likely thought.

“Did my scent finally fade off of your comfort blanket?” Obito prompted meanly, electing to ignore his own strategy in his irritation. “Need something new on it, do you?” He couldn’t help but antagonize Kakashi a little. Of all the ridiculous things that had happened to him, this one still defied belief.

“Obito,” Kakashi said. Nothing more, nothing less than his name. It was a tone of stern admonishment, naturally, but there was a quaver in it. Like anxiety. Like--almost like fear.
Obito pursed his lips a little and renewed his resolve to watch.

Kakashi shook his head minutely, as though trying to clear it. After another deep breath, he moved his hand to the knot of his robe. He pulled it open slowly, like he was moving through molasses. Obito had never seen Kakashi completely exposed in his entire life—never more than the relevant parts. He may have been without his Sharingan’s hawklike clarity, but his eyes clung to every possible detail as it was revealed. Kakashi’s body was caught by a sliver of moonlight coming in from the window. Obito’s first thought was that Kakashi was very pale. As his torso came into view, Obito saw that he was somehow smaller than he might have imagined, very thin and lithe, leanly muscular with barely a scrap of body fat to spare.

Kakashi shrugged off the rest of the robe and let it fall to the floor. Obito took in all of him, every flaw and imbalance, every symmetry and beauty. Kakashi was a study in scar tissue, fine thin bands of silver littered liberally on his fair skin. Obito immediately picked out the broad ‘X’ crossing over the span of his chest, and the deep indentation of a stab wound just below his ribcage, the marks of his own making. The span of Kakashi’s arm looked like an electrical storm. It would have been impossible to tell it with clothing disrupting the contrast, but his right hand was lighter by a fraction, and up his wrist and past his elbow there was a fractal that dissipated near his shoulder, likely wrapping around the back. The mark of electrical discharge. That arm—the arm that killed her. And the scars that riddled that wrist, horizontal and intentional—those were the marks that had nearly killed him.

He was naked underneath the robe. Nothing between them but air. Just like me, Obito thought.

He wasn’t sure what Kakashi was angling for—what he was trying to prove. Binding him to the bed was, what, an assertion of control? What purpose could it possibly serve when their roles were so clearly outlined already? Legally mandated, as a matter of fact.

Kakashi got back onto the bed, and the motion drew Obito’s eyes down between his legs. Of course he could see Kakashi’s cock, swaying at half-mast and quickly rising, but beyond that, he could swear he saw the skin high up on Kakashi’s thighs glistening, especially as he spread them to straddle atop Obito’s body. It looked like the sheen of oil. Like--

Like Obito now fully understood what Kakashi had been up to in the bathroom.

He wanted to laugh. Reckless. You’re making a huge mistake, and I’m going to let you make it.
Kakashi sat back with his weight on his knees and the balls of his feet, body resting just above Obito’s knees. He looked over Obito’s body for several breaths, ever-so-slightly chewing on his lower lip as he did. He seemed to shake himself then, just a little, and moved forward with determination. He leaned in close again, spine curving so that their chests didn’t quite touch. His lips tickled the angle of Obito’s jaw, and he inhaled there deeply. Obito tensed, anticipating the subduing bite any second. His hands balled into fists. No bite came, however, just Kakashi’s nose tracing down Obito’s neck, his sternum. Kakashi shifted back a little further, and the path of those soft inhalations led further down, along the joint of Obito’s inner thigh, then back across his balls, warm puffs of air that had Obito bending his neck to look down and watch him work, tongue flicking out to wet his lower lip. He was getting hard, too. Impossible not to, really.

Obito relaxed to let Kakashi do whatever he thought was best. Kakashi wrapped a hand around his base and set to work, lips parting and engulfing the crown of Obito’s cock. It was surreal—he’d probably masturbated once or twice under these sheets as a child, and now decades later Hatake Kakashi was between his legs, sucking his cock on top of them. Life certainly was bizarre.

Kakashi still couldn’t take him completely. With his sensitive gag reflex and Obito’s girth, he probably never would. Nevertheless, he licked and sucked Obito to full hardness, coating him liberally in saliva as he did. He pulled back to consider the shaft in his face, eyes widening a little in the low light, a wrinkle between his brows as though he were making some mental calculation but the numbers didn’t quite add up. He bit his lip again, one sharp white tooth catching against the skin of it.

Obito raised one brow, watching.

Kakashi shifted up until his knees bracketed Obito’s waist. He caught Obito’s eye for a moment, perhaps searching for fear, or for dissent. Obito held still and continued to watch him, taking in the way Kakashi was perched above him, hesitant, foolish. Trying to affect confidence and falling far short of it.

The bend in Kakashi’s knees became more acute, and he reached behind himself to grip Obito’s shaft and keep it straight behind him. It took a few seconds to line up correctly, but Obito quickly registered a warm, slick ring of pressure bearing down on the head of his cock. Kakashi was breathing heavily through his nose, lips turned minutely downward in presumable discomfort.

Did you know how this would feel all along? Obito wondered. Yet you still did that to me on the living room floor? No--no. This you trying to find out. You think you’re safe if you just tie me in place. What are you trying to prove?

Kakashi tried several times, pushing and pressing back on Obito and going nowhere, until he sat back with a soft curse. Obito huffed a little through his nose and smirked. “You can’t manage it, can
you? Not so easy,” he sneered. In truth, from this angle, he could see the difference in proportion between himself and Kakashi. Kakashi was longer, true, but Obito was a good degree thicker. If Obito had struggled to take him, Kakashi was, objectively, faced with an even more challenging task. Kakashi had likely tightened back up if he’d been preparing himself in the bathroom. He’d walked around, shifted, marched Obito across the apartment—in all that time, there was no way on earth he could still be so easily breached.

It seemed like a stupid thing to overlook.

Kakashi looked thrown off, frustrated. Even in the gloom, Obito could make out a flush of embarrassment blooming over his cheeks and ears. The red tinge made its way all the way down over his pale chest. Setting his jaw he reached up over Obito’s head for the windowsill above the bed. As he did so, his groin hovered just inches from Obito’s face. He took the opportunity to bite Kakashi’s inner thigh, up close near his balls, hard enough to make Kakashi gasp and freeze, startled. He mastered himself enough to retrieve a small container of oil. He glared murderously at Obito as he withdrew, then coated his fingers liberally with the stuff. Obito relaxed onto the bed and observed in silence as Kakashi, blushing even harder than before, reached back and slid a finger into his body, working a little too fast, a little too hastily.

He couldn’t have done this before, Obito mused. There were little pained winces, soft grunts, and Kakashi was going faster than Obito, who’d done this several times by now, would have considered wise. In a short span, Kakashi had three fingers curled into his body, though the effort had caused sweat to bead at his hairline. He braced himself up by the strength of his legs alone, his other hand working to keep Obito hard, though he needn’t have worried about that. This was too good not to stay hard over.

Then Kakashi removed his fingers, his index dragging at the rim a little as he positioned himself to try Obito once more. This time he began more easily, taking more of Obito’s head at the first press.

You were wondering, weren't you? How this felt? Let me show you.

Kakashi eased back against him, wincing, and made a soft mmh sound in his throat as he did so. Obito noticed, from the other side of the equation this time, the moment his head breached Kakashi in full. Kakashi slid down almost an inch more, and he cried out, stiffening, as he did. Obito could feel him clench tight, feel his thighs tighten on either side of his hips. This was new, although not entirely so. Obito had penetrated another person before, and he knew the motions of the act. It certainly didn’t feel the same as the women he had had; Kakashi was tighter at the entrance and offered less resistance as he eased in. These were thinner, more muscular thighs which bracketed him; bonier, straighter hips. It was very interesting (very stupid) of Kakashi, though, to offer him the physical upper hand, restraints be damned.
Kakashi was breathing loudly in the otherwise quiet room. He hadn’t taken much more than a third of Obito in, but he remained tense around him, trembling enough that Obito could feel the vibration of it travel down the length of his cock. Kakashi made a strange, throaty whine, tried to back up off of him and froze immediately. He took several gulps of air and tried to press down further, only to freeze again, something like fear stealing into his wide, wide eyes. Obito knew that look well, the searching desperation of a man come unmoored, helpless and in need of purchase. There was a plea for help there, a metaphorical hand reaching out for anything to grab onto.

“Oh,” Kakashi mumbled dumbly, blushing even darker along his chest and neck, nipples pebbling in the cool air. His voice was so small, vulnerable in an enticing way.

“Oh,” Obito echoed with a knowing smirk.

The Mizukage had had a similar look in his eyes just before Obito had erased his mind. Like he was begging for Obito to take over. He would always remember the smile, the relief on his face before his features settled into blank stillness. But he’d worked for that. He’d chipped away at the man to get to that point, over years and years. This was different. He hadn’t done a thing, and Kakashi had instead walked right into a trap of his own making. Obito felt a spark of elation. This was the chance he’d been seeking. His opportunity to level the playing field. Kakashi had placed it neatly in his lap—in the most literal way possible.

He pitched his voice carefully into the low, steady thrum of suggestion, intensely curious now that Kakashi had revealed this vulnerable underbelly. “How does this feel, Kakashi?”

“A-ahh--I’m--I-it’s,” Kakashi was stammering, breathless, completely lost for words.

Obito thrust upward, and Kakashi wilted against him with a sudden yelp, palms falling low on Obito’s abdomen and nails catching at his sides. His hands were trembling too, trying to brace himself against Obito’s hips to prevent any further movement. Obito nudged him again, and instead of a yelp, he earned a whimper, Obito’s name blurted out with help me buried within those three syllables. Kakashi slid down a fraction more, and his trembling intensified.

“Kakashi,” Obito replied, wanting very badly to be holding those hips, guiding him down. “Kakashi, untie me.” Kakashi had changed. He seemed confused, like he wasn’t fully sure why he’d restrained Obito in the first place. Like Obito’s suggestion made more sense than anything he could have come up with on his own. Obito rolled his hips again, slipping in a little more, enough to see the tension give out a little in Kakashi’s spine. “I’ll make you feel good,” he urged. “Let me help you.”

Kakashi nodded at that, almost eagerly. He shivered violently as he leaned forward (pressing Obito
against the front side of his inner walls when he did so), hands striving for his carefully tied knot and undoing it with suddenly clumsy fingers. As the rope fell away, Obito rotated his wrists a little, stretching them out before he sat up, leaning Kakashi back into his lap as he came upright.

Kakashi sat back a moment, blank and seemingly confused. His ass twitched rhythmically around Obito’s shaft, hot and incredibly tight. Obito was able to hold Kakashi in close by the hips, still feeling resistance inside, but a resistance that ebbed by the second. Kakashi was staring at him, still waiting for orders, instructions, guidance. Obito took a chance, inspired to the idea the memory of his conquest of Kirigakure. He met Kakashi’s gaze fiercely, straining his Sharingan eye for anything at all. Though he never felt the blaze of his full chakra behind it, in the moment it locked onto the slow spin of its sister eye, he felt something. The very slightest of sparks. He saw a flimsy, hazy path forward and he took it.

Just a hint of feedback trickled through—and suddenly they were connected, albeit barely. He felt a tendril of chakra reaching out from Kakashi, clinging to his energy, recognizing its own and stretching across space to touch it. Kakashi’s Sharingan turned sluggishly, and then the tension remaining between those silver brows relaxed completely. It couldn’t have been entirely doujutsu; Obito’s mind only barely brushed Kakashi’s, just halting, brief touches. He had to have been willing, suggestible already for Obito to take hold. Still, it was something. Something after such a long stretch of nothing. He wouldn’t speak on it, wouldn’t give it words and risk endangering himself, but in that moment, the haze over his vision lifted a little. He was beginning to see, after months in the dark. Kakashi’s thoughts flickered like a guttering flame in a dark room, barely there, but there—seeable, knowable—nevertheless. His eye was working. He wanted to crow in relief.

In those short glimpses into Kakashi’s mind, Obito saw fear. Fear and desire and confusion, as if those thoughts were actually reaching out, pushing past Obito’s impediment and begging to be seen. Obito concentrated and sent back steady assurance to coat the negative emotions and buffer the positive ones. It was considered a very basic coercion trick for an advanced Sharingan user, but it was the absolute most Obito could hope to manage right then.

Still, even that must have helped Kakashi over some invisible barrier, because the last of his willfulness evaporated immediately. The distress vanished. Kakashi’s body relaxed around Obito’s intrusion and let him sink deeper, down to the hilt, with a soft moan. His ankles crossed just over Obito’s low back and he eased in close. There was a blush high on his cheeks, a slight, unthinking smile now curving the lips on that addictive mouth. Obito felt relief radiating from Kakashi’s mind now, a deep contentment that reminded him of the mindless bliss that he himself felt whenever Kakashi disturbed the bite on his neck. The tables were turned now. Finally.

Now.

Obito surged up, swiveling his body and holding Kakashi in place by the hips. In one deft move, he had Kakashi dumped onto his back, breath knocked from his lungs as he hit the mattress. Obito
pinned him down, spreading his legs wide and hoisting them up over his shoulders. He ground down heavily, aiming for that subtle firm lump he could feel on those inner walls. As he struck it Kakashi’s back arched and his mouth fell open.

Lovely. “Do you like that? You were curious, weren’t you?” Obito thrust again.

Kakashi gasped, pulling for air as best as he could. “Yessssss...”

Oh, he could kill him like this, if he were so inclined--wrap his hands around Kakashi’s throat, just like he’d done with Konan, hang on until he went limp and still. But even as he entertained these ugly thoughts his hands were stroking up Kakashi’s thighs, his dick nudging deeper, deeper. He felt strong like this, fuelled by his success and by the slick perfect hold of Kakashi’s ass.

“Beg me for it, then,” he cajoled, rutting into him faster. “You can do that. It’ll feel so good to get what you came here for, Kakashi. Don’t you agree?”

“Yes--!!” The reply was immediate, sublimely honest as it fell from his lips.

Obito returned to the pitch of voice that followed naturally when he drew on the Sharingan’s hypnotic influence. Slow. Clear. Inexorable.

“Beg, Kakashi.”

And immediately came, “Ahh, Obito, Obito, please...!!” Kakashi’s voice was taut and trembling in delicious supplication.

The grin threatened to split Obito’s face in two. He remembered this feeling, and he had missed it keenly. This was power, and a new kind at that; one he’d never held before. Kakashi was begging. Fully at his mercy. This changed everything. He thrust into Kakashi hard and deep as he felt that triumph rise inside him. Kakashi squirmed dizzily on the sheets, grabbing onto the linen for dear life as he was rammed open again and again.

*We both have our demons, don’t we? Only now you’re learning that mine are stronger.*
"Look at you--so desperate for me, for this. I have you now." Obito whispered, almost giddy, breath tickling Kakashi’s earlobe as he pistoned into him. He was rewarded instantly with a soft whimper, a heady blend of fear and assent. “You’ve just given me everything.”

And indeed, the dark, twisted parts of Obito’s soul rejoiced. The monster in him roared its victory.

You’re mine, mine, mine.

What will you do, now that you’re at my mercy? What will I do with you?

Obito cast his eyes upward, toward the air vent near the ceiling, He couldn’t see them, but he knew they were there. He knew they were watching. He addressed them directly with a smirk, raising his voice to fill the room. “All of you. Look to your leader.”

At that, Kakashi screwed his eyes shut, trembling all around Obito. He breathed in short, shuddering gasps, hips working Obito’s length against his prostate. His cock was ramrod straight now, steadily dribbling wetness onto taut, flexing abdominal muscles which gleamed in the scant light that invaded the narrow space between them. Obito wasn’t so jaded that he couldn’t appreciate objective beauty—and, he admitted privately, this was beautiful. The visual, the sensation, the conquest, the moment. Visceral, crude, and fucking beautiful.

Drunk on this new, amazingly altered dynamic, he leaned into Kakashi’s fever-hot ear and murmured, “Good boy,” punctuating the sibilant praise with a quick nip to the lobe, a sharp tug on Kakashi’s hair. And just like that, Kakashi came, body arcing off the bed with a loud howl that shattered the quiet and rang through the room. It seemed his entire being bent with the force of his cry, and he spilled messily over himself with violent, full-body shudders.

Without pausing, Obito drove in harder through those howls, hips smacking against skin, milking the orgasm out of Kakashi with every vicious thrust. He was close himself now, and more than ready to fill that tight, warm channel with his mark. Kakashi’s legs dangled loosely on either side of Obito’s flanks. He used those thighs for leverage as he pistoned in and out relentlessly, delighting as he saw Kakashi’s eyes roll back in his sweat-drenched head. Kakashi’s cock made a few desperate last pulses, then jerked, deep red and dry, before falling back against his belly, utterly drained.

Obito came then with a triumphant shout, burying himself balls-deep into Kakashi and emptying every last drop into him with a force that wrung the air from his lungs. Oh, that felt incredible.
Distantly, he could hear neighbourhood dogs howling and baying in the nearby streets, almost echoing Kakashi’s cries from moments before. He stilled for just a moment, catching his breath, watching as the sweat from his brow fell to mingle with the come painting Kakashi’s stomach. He pulled out, leaving Kakashi’s hole twitching fitfully as if begging for him to return. He let his eyes rove over that body, allowing himself a moment to appreciate his spectacular handiwork and feel the deep internal satisfaction at having finally staked his claim. This was a definitive statement that could stand up against the wretched magic of Kakashi’s bite. His hold on him was deeper now: he had access, however small, to Kakashi’s mind.

Obito moved to stand, and Kakashi made a halting movement, a soft noise with a briefly outstretched hand, before pulling back, only barely reining himself back in. It was endearing and pathetic in precisely equal amounts. He was coming back to himself, it seemed, but he wasn’t all there yet. Obito looked at him knowingly, then got up off the bed.

“Take your time getting up,” he offered magnanimously, sparing Kakashi’s debauched person one final, smug glance. The deep ache of his own first time was still very vivid in his memory. The cold, lonely moments after the fact, picking the pieces of his dignity up off the floor. He’d been far kinder to Kakashi in comparison, really. He was lying in his own warm bed, after all. He’d prepared himself, stretched himself slick, had come in and asked—no, demanded—to have Obito inside him.

He’d simply gotten what he’d wished for in the end, and in doing so, given Obito a crucial bit of his agency back.

Obito turned and walked out the door, leaving Kakashi splayed out, stunned, on the sheets, still breathing raggedly. He scratched at his chest absently as he made his way to the bathroom, a smile still tugging at the corners of his mouth. Moments later, he heard Kakashi stir (idiot, he thought), shifting across the bed and trying to stand with short, stressed little huffs. And, right after, the sound of the mattress creaking as it welcomed him back into its clutches.

Obito shut the bathroom door.

He took a long, satisfying shower, and continued smiling through the worried, poorly disguised whispers that filtered down from the vent on the ceiling.

*Have I got your attention now?*
“What the fuck?! What the FUCK?! ”

Mink clapped her hand over Badger’s mask before he could continue his tirade. “Shut up,” she hissed, though she felt her heart thudding in her throat. This was… Kakashi-senpai had gone too far. This dalliance with Obito Uchiha had just spiraled completely out of control.

She moved her hand aside cautiously.

“ What the fuck?! ” Badger snarled again, softer but still bristling. His voice had shattered the stunned silence from moments before. They were gathered together in the crawlspace for shift change, all four of them crammed in close instead of the usual two on-duty operatives. Badger and Eagle had just come on to relieve them when Haruno Sakura left, but they’d all been forced to remain, frozen in place at what Kakashi-senpai had done next.

Mink had been privy to the conversation between Senpai and Sakura-san. She’d seen the young medic turn to him as soon as the front door was shut with tears brimming in her eyes. “I wish I could help you,” she’d said. “I wish I knew what to say or do, but Sensei you’re scaring me. This isn’t healthy, for you or for him… You’re trapped here too. Just as much of a prisoner.”

“Sakura--” Senpai had ventured, and his voice had been pained, exhausted. Mink’s heart twisted in her chest at the memory of it.

“-- Please,” Sakura had snapped, voice rising loud over Senpai’s. “Please reconsider what you’re doing.”

Senpai had been silent for a long moment. Finally, he heaved a heavy sigh and murmured, “It isn’t that simple, Sakura. You of all people should understand that.”

“I, of all--!” She’d looked affronted, then hurt. She took a few steps back from him, clutched her
medical kit to her chest and darted away.

Senpai had watched her go until she was well out of sight, then sighed and retreated inside.

Mink was the farthest thing imaginable from a prude; she was a proud veteran (at the ripe old age of twenty-six) of the Special Intel group and the Fourth Shinobi War. She was both talented at and enthusiastic about missions that hinged upon her ability to seduce and subdue. It was the one part of work she was happy to bring home with her; she was proud of (just about) every notch on her bedpost.

She’d been so young when she worked ANBU alongside Kakashi-senpai, picked early for Special Intel because she’d had a knack--and the mental stability--to take full control of a fucked-up situation. Kakashi had hand-picked her for his squad because she was scrappy, deadly, and easily underestimated, given her small stature. She was best with a tanto, and nearly as good with anything handy; she’d killed a man with a wine opener once, and the tool still sat proudly on her bar at home.

She remembered him asking her once how she stayed so calm when missions turned ugly. “I’ve seen uglier,” had been her honest reply. Nothing was quite as ugly as seeing her parents crushed to death in a burning house, just inches away from her reach while a monstrous nine-tailed fox raged through her neighbourhood. He’d offered her a slight, wry smile (barely discernable under his mask), and a nod of acknowledgment for saying so, and that small gesture from the legendary Sharingan Kakashi had meant the world.

It was backbreaking work, crouching in crawlspaces and listening to surveillance microphones, watching camera feeds from the places they couldn’t physically go. She preferred the days when she could stand outside on the roof or the balcony, stretch her legs and breathe a bit of fresh air. Then again, considering she stood just over five feet in height, she probably shouldn’t have been the one to complain about the cramped quarters. Bear’s tall, stocky build and Eagle’s long, lanky frame were certainly suffering much more than she was.

They’d done this out of love and respect for Kakashi-senpai. Out of duty to their village. They were the strongest, the most skilled--the best ANBU had to offer. They’d be required to seal and contain a monster if it came down to it, and they were willing.

As for Mink, she’d taken the posting for several reasons, the first of which was to protect Kakashi-senpai from the man who’d set that same monstrous creature loose on Konoha all those years ago. If Uchiha Obito wanted to prey upon Konoha again, he’d have to go through her first. The second was to protect Senpai from the phantoms of his own past; she was one of the few who had witnessed his night terrors in their younger days--the way he’d thrash and groan and dig at his left eye in his sleep, calling out for Obito, someone who’d been presumed dead for years. Somehow one man had turned out to be both things--a feared terrorist and a treasured memory--and knowing that, Mink knew where she had to be. She had to help her former senpai house this madman, and be there to save him
from himself if need be.

She was failing at that last task spectacularly, it seemed. They all were.

Neither she nor Bear had known what to do that first night Kakashi-senpai lunged at Uchiha with intent to kill. The prisoner’s life was the least important factor in the equation; live or die, as long as he was contained their objective was being met. He hadn’t posed any true physical threat to Senpai; he could handle himself better than any of the four of them individually, after all. Weak and emaciated, Obito had been easily checked, but what had followed defied imagination. One moment they were on high alert, watching a violent altercation erupt as Senpai’s temper boiled over, and the next, they were frozen in disbelief as the two of them began to rut desperately together. They were watching a man they’d been led by for years bite a man bloody and jerk him off at the same time.

Presently, her current team leader spoke. Bear’s larger frame was visibly tense, and he sounded exhausted. He’d pulled a triple shift just now, as he had done for the last few weeks, loathe to leave this situation unsupervised for too long. Mink felt a wave of pity for him; he’d been just about to go home for the night when this happened. “He’s been out of line with Uchiha from day one. Aside from my initial report to Hokage-sama though… I believed he had control over the situation, even if it was getting personal and unprofessional. I believed he’d be able to keep Uchiha in check. Now, I’m not so confident. He’s compromised.”

“So what do we do?” This was Eagle, with the long tail of silken black hair that gave him away as a Hyuuga, even with the mask in place. “This was premeditated. You all saw him in the bathroom… he wanted to do this. He took this irresponsible risk upon himself, didn’t he?”

Mink still hadn’t shaken that image from her mind, nor the singularly voyeuristic feeling she’d gotten witnessing it. They’d all watched in stunned silence as Senpai had shut off the shower and reached back to finger himself, lubricating his fingers and pressing them inside. He’d grimaced, bit his lip, but worked at it until he could get three fingers into his body.

Then he’d sought Uchiha Obito out so that he could get fucked by him.

“Couldn’t that have been deliberate too? Like you said, he prepared.” Why she was playing Devil’s advocate, she didn’t know.

“It was deliberately reckless,” Eagle countered. Privately, she agreed. “He overestimated, clearly.”
“I mean, that looked like subspace to me,” she offered. She’d seen it wash over some of her own partners before. In the right context, it could be a fascinating, deeply erotic transformation to behold. Here, where there were no boundaries established, with the dynamic between them spiraling quickly out of control, it was an ominous situation at best.

“Subspace?” Bear asked, the term clearly foreign to him.

“That glassy look in his eyes, the easy obedience?” This close together, Mink could feel Badger shiver. Very quietly he said, “I know what that’s like. You’re not all there when you’re down deep. You might consent to just about anything.”

Mink looked at him carefully and made a mental note to ask him about this later. Probably over several drinks.

“Are you saying Kakashi-senpai was submitting to him on a psychological level?” Eagle asked,

“Practically on a spiritual level, if you believe in that shit,” Mink muttered.

“How did he get there?” Bear demanded, clearly in unfamiliar territory. “Is it likely to happen again?

“Who knows?” she sighed.

“What if this isn’t all Kakashi-senpai’s doing?” Badger suggested. “Do we know if they did things right when they cut off Uchiha’s doujutsu?”

“Yes, of course,” Eagle said, a clipped note of offense in his voice. “I was there. Are you really doubting Godaime Hokage’s surgical skill? The Hyuugas’ chakra mapping?”

“I don’t know, maybe?!” Badger snarled, bristling agitatedly. “Someone needs to be questioning this! How do you even know how deep Uchiha’s influence runs? The reports say this man crippled the former Mizukage’s mind and ran the Kirigakure government from the shadows!”

“But that required a working Sharingan--” Mink interjected.
“Isn’t it working?” Badger demanded. “You all just saw what I saw, didn’t you? The way he pinned him with his eyes? He was doing something.”

“Eagle?” Bear swiveled his head to regard the agitated Hyuuga.

He made an irritated sound, but reluctantly admitted: “There was something different about his chakra when they were… together. Microscopically different, but it had Hatake-san’s chakra oscillating in sync with it.”

“Exactly,” Badger bit out. “He’s after something. He’s going to catch all our stupid asses off guard and kill us. And if he convinces Senpai to take us out? To hand him the key and just fucking slit his own throat after betraying all of us? That’s on all of us right here. Because of the decisions we’re making right now. He told us we were supposed to be ‘extensions of his will’. His failsafes, if absolutely needed. We can’t just wait and see how this plays out. We have to be able to do what needs to be done without hesitation.”

“We’re hesitating because we’re not clear on what needs to be done,” she said sharply.

Badger laughed then, short and mean. “Mink, you’re the one who stopped me from cutting off his damned head when he went for Senpai with a fucking kunai. I’m not sure I trust your priorities here.”

She could have stabbed him in the thigh for that, but she had enough self-control to just breathe audibly through her nose, letting the sound be enough to make him back off. “The priority is peace. At least on the other side of these walls. Kakashi-senpai was ready to sacrifice his entire livelihood for this--to save his friend--”

“--FRIEND!?” This time, it was Eagle’s hand clapping over Badger’s mask. Badger shoved him away in irritation, jostling them all.

“--Whatever Uchiha was or is to him--from execution! This is part of the compromise. The wards are in place. The four of us are in place. He isn't going to be able to just wander off.” She had to believe in that, or they’d have nothing at all.

They shifted over the hallway crawlspace so they could get a better view of Kakashi’s bedroom. Even in the dark, they could see him struggling to his feet, naked, and slowly limping his way to the mirror on the opposite wall. He stood there before it, standing a long while in silence, unmoving, staring at his reflection as though expecting some kind of answer for his actions. Mink’s heart sank; it was barely perceptible in the dimness, but she could make out a thin trickle of fluid snaking down his leg. They could all see it. Then Kakashi-senpai turned, froze, and looked up at them, aware of them although he couldn’t possibly see them from where he stood. They heard him sigh, heard the worry and distress entrenched in the sound of it, and watched him wander, slowly, gingerly, back to bed.

Did he know? Did he have any idea what a mistake he’d just made?

Uchiha’s voice from earlier rang in her mind. *All of you. Look to your leader.* Well, they were definitely looking now.

He curled up on his mattress, shivering, and dragged the green shuriken-patterned blanket over his body. *Uchiha Obito’s blanket,* she thought to herself. Senpai looked so small all of a sudden, even on his twin mattress. He didn’t move after that.

He’d shown his whole hand. Mink could’ve *told* him. *Should’ve* told him. Just because you were fucking someone, just because you were naked and they were naked and they could see you… didn’t mean you let them see you. That was foolhardy. An invitation to be hurt.

Uchiha had dug his claws into Senpai. Perhaps deeper than he himself knew.

“Sub drop,” Badger whispered, and by the Sage the haunted note in his voice was so *telling.* She felt a sudden wave of sympathy for him, all her previous anger forgotten. Bear and Eagle turned to him, and their confusion was clear despite their masks. He didn’t elaborate, and his closed-off body language clearly declared that he did not intend to.

Mink nodded in agreement. She knew how a submissive partner could get, given the right circumstance. She just never imagined in a million years, even as the sexual relationship had erupted between himself and Obito before her eyes, that Hatake Kakashi would be one. There was no denying what they’d all just witnessed, though. Kakashi-senpai had kept himself under such rigid control for as long as she’d known him, and Mink knew control like that was ultimately a brittle thing. All it took was the right setting, and it could shatter like thin glass. Some of her favourite conquests were high-ranking politicians and the like, who went under easily--and deep--for the same reasons. They held so much responsibility day to day that helplessness and surrender seemed irresistibly attractive. Senpai had been caught off guard, that much was clear, and had done so at the hands of someone he held immense emotional attachment to. In the moment he’d relaxed against Uchiha Obito’s body, he’d handed him all the reins whether he realized it at the time or not.
And now he’d been dropped, left to crawl out of subspace on his own, with only the reality of his actions--and the reality of having had witnesses to all of it--to greet him on the other side. Obito had left him like that and, unfortunately, Mink couldn’t find it in herself to blame him. Not after what she’d seen Senpai do to him. It was wrong, of course, yet almost kind by comparison. She hated thinking that way.

Eagle sighed. “He’s compromised--moreso than we thought. I don’t know if we can contain this.”

Badger snorted in irritation. “Uchiha just fucking called us all out. I don’t think we should.”

Mink turned to Bear. “How much of this does Hokage-sama know?”

He tried to fold his arms, but wasn’t quite able to manage it in the tight crawlspace. He huffed in frustration. “She knows Senpai’s crossed the line, gotten physical with Uchiha. I didn’t really expand on how frequently, or anything.”

Uchiha was humming a cheerful tune in the shower now, audible through the vents behind her.

She could practically hear Bear’s teeth grinding at this point. “She must have some idea, though. I get the sense that she knew where all of this could lead. But she put her faith in Senpai’s self-control, and now here we are.”

“Fucked,” Badger supplied bitterly. “I mean, right now Senpai would hold the door open for Uchiha and let him out into the village if he was asked nicely.”

The shower shut off, and they watched—but-didn’t-watch as Uchiha dried and dressed himself. Mink tried to ignore the bile that crept into her throat as he exited the bathroom, whistling jovially, and headed back to the living room to rest.

Silence reigned for a moment.

“This can’t go on,” Bear declared grimly. “I’ll have to rebrief Tsunade-sama in the morning.”
Chapter 18

Chapter Summary

Two closed systems have begun to break down.

Obito slept for nearly half a day. Given the heavy silence in the apartment, Kakashi must have done similarly—though, he imagined, in a less peaceful state of mind. Warm from the shower and sated down to his bones, he’d lounged on the couch for a handful of minutes at best before sinking into a heavy, languid slumber that claimed him for hours. Waking up, he could already feel a lazy smile stretching his lips even before his eyes crept open. He stretched in place, limbs full of a soreness he could only describe as pleasant. For once.

For the first time since this new life of his began, he felt as though he had a real, substantial advantage. He’d gained a little ground earlier, when he’d discovered how badly Kakashi had succumbed to his dubious charms; but this was a massive leap by comparison. His mind flashed back gamely to last night, to the image and feel of Kakashi writhing atop his own bed, fitted snug around Obito’s cock. He could understand, suddenly, why Kakashi found it so impossible to avoid him. There was a stubborn little drive low in the pit of his stomach even now which urged him to go back into that quiet bedroom for another round. His hand had drifted into his lap to idly stroke the first stirrings of need. This couldn’t be how people — normal people with uneventful quiet lives — lived. He was aware that he’d never had much of a childhood or any real teenage years to speak of. Maybe this was the kind of libido he’d missed out on having while he’d been otherwise occupied. This wild drive seemed so excessive to him, given his age and his circumstances, but Obito wasn’t in a position to dispute facts.

The fact was: he and Kakashi were locked in a bloody stalemate, like two hawks fighting in midair, at the sudden mercy of gravity with their talons only digging in deeper as they fell. His one hand remained lazily between his legs as he continued to ruminate on such facts, but the other reached contemplatively for his left eye, skimming the socket of it. He could feel the sluggish hum of chakra in his right eye once more. It was so, so quiet — a whisper where it had once been a deafening scream; yet it added that telltale fullness to his left socket that no borrowed eye alone could ever give.

Had Tsunade, her pack of Hyuuga, and that precocious girl, Sakura, actually failed to fully sever his connection? Or — and he found himself excited at this prospect, suddenly — was he slowly healing? He shouldn’t have been able to connect to Kakashi with his Sharingan at all, and he wasn’t sure he would’ve been able to do it even a few weeks ago. He wondered how much more he might be able to regain with time. Then, he sobered immediately. It would be idiotic to test those limits with the level of scrutiny on him. He’d lost so much already, and he’d be damned if he let Konoha take one more iota of anything from him. He knew how to be careful. He knew how to be patient.

Frankly, he wasn’t convinced he’d need assistance bringing Kakashi into check. The man was doing it all on his own.

Obito’s stomach growled, suddenly loud in the quiet room. The sound of it shook him out of his reverie. He realized he was hungry — ravenous, really, so he got up with a yawn and a vague speculative smile, planning to make himself some breakfast. The main hall was still dark, as was Kakashi’s room beyond. He got a pan out of the cupboard, rifled around for oil, and found the same
old rice he’d used yesterday. One of these days he’d run the rice cooker himself, but it would not be
today.

He wasn’t any great hand in the kitchen. He’d never really learned what foods went together, or how
to cook or season things. He’d lived on candy and snack foods as a boy — his father had relied on
his mother to cook, and once she’d died, they only really tasted home-cooked dishes when Obito’s
grandmother came to visit. Every other meal had been takeout or conbini bento, served out over
several days in varying degrees of staleness.

Obito opened the refrigerator and rifled through it. As usual, it was sparsely filled, but the contents
were fresh and well-organized. Meat was portioned into single servings, fruit and vegetables all pre-
cut. A house without knives made such preparations necessary. There was no rule against cracking
eggs or reheating rice, however. As he reached for the three eggs he’d planned on, he hesitated over
a plastic-wrapped mackerel, whole, but for the fact that it’d been cleaned. Another uncalled-for
memory surfaced.

The Nakano was a wonder at sunset — not any more so than any other body of water, but special to
him nevertheless, because it ran through Konoha. It was the living artery of the city, rushing,
winding, and gurgling through the cliff-sheltered forest that was their home. Obito remembered the
precise shade of flame-orange the water was that afternoon, the way it was shot through with
shimmering ribbons of gold. He had been watching a lone figure as it waded into the shallows while
the sun dipped beneath the trees and the orange-gold became a mosaic of indigo and pink. He
remembered how small Kakashi had seemed, silhouetted against the broad swath of water. His
skinny white ankles were exposed for once, frail and thin compared to the wide, baggy clothing he
wore. Obito watched from the safety of the brush as Kakashi cast his line again and again, skillful
and precise in a way he couldn’t imagine himself being. The word amazing had passed his lips
before he could rein himself in, but he’d truly meant it then. Kakashi, barely more than half his size,
was so proficient, so fluid in his movement that Obito stood mesmerized for a time — and admittedly
remained mesmerized as he ate Kakashi’s meticulously prepared food later that night, with Rin
sitting by his side.

The memory of Rin struck Obito like a dash of cold water to the face. Obito grimaced at the old,
familiar spike of pain in his chest, and quickly shook his head to clear it. Irritated now, Obito sneered
at the fish, seized his eggs, and shut the fridge door hard enough that some of the glassware rattled in
a nearby cabinet. He took a steadying breath and put the skillet on the stove. He fried the rice in oil
and soy sauce until it started to get crispy, then quickly added the eggs, took the colourless lump off
the heat, and overturned it onto a plate. He contemplated ketchup. Kakashi didn’t have ketchup.

Obito didn’t get more than a few bites in before he heard the door down the hall open. He paused,
chopsticks loaded, waiting to see Kakashi round the corner, but instead he heard a few short, slow
footsteps, then the slide and click of the bathroom door.

The shower ran — again for an abnormally long time — as Obito chewed his way through the
modestly palatable plate of rice and eggs. Once finished, he considered tossing another chopstick
elsewhere, but refrained — largely because two lost chopsticks would make a pair, and he couldn’t
have that. One alone would be far more annoying.

Somewhere beneath the clatter of his dish in the sink, Obito caught the rustle of Kakashi’s movement
once again. He froze for a moment to listen. He could hear soft steps, slow and uneven, returning to
the bedroom across the hall, which drew up the image of the crumpled, stained mess they’d made on
that old shuriken-print comforter from a lifetime ago. He thought of Kakashi curled beneath that
same blanket, feeling what they’d done — what he’d invited — until he fell asleep. If he was able to
sleep. Obito hadn’t gone easy on him. Even so, it was early afternoon by now, and Obito hadn’t
heard a sound from that room overnight.

A minute or two later, Kakashi re-emerged, fully dressed in his Jounin fatigues, mask drawn up over his face. He glanced up at Obito as he rounded the corner into the kitchen. Obito glanced back, and smirked slightly when Kakashi quickly averted his gaze.

“Kakashi,” Obito hailed neutrally, watching for his reaction. Kakashi’s answering flinch would have been obvious even if he hadn’t been watching for it. Kakashi didn’t look back his way, instead opting to shuffle past him and fetch a kettle of water, setting it on the stove to boil. He limped the whole way. Kakashi’s spine was rigid, his steps wide and obviously pained. There was a deliberate element to his breathing that Obito focused on, something that would seem almost meditative, if not for the obvious desperation with which Kakashi clung that facade. It was false — false as anything. If nothing else, Obito might have expected some acknowledgement of their newly altered dynamic. He knew better by now, though, knew how Kakashi managed. There would be no conversation, no resolution of any kind. They’d go on, stilted, colliding awkwardly again and again.

Kakashi busied himself in the kitchen, opening a cupboard, only to stare blankly at it and shut it again. He did the same with the fridge. In time, the teapot began to whistle, and Kakashi snatched it off the stovetop abruptly.

Obito watched his back, the stiffly bunched muscles between his shoulder blades. He could hear the gurgle and pour of hot water into the earthenware mug, and see Kakashi’s arm lift to stir tea in five measured revolutions, before he brought the mug toward the table. He pulled out the chair and made to sit, only to jerk in pain, sucking in a gasp through his teeth.

Obito felt his own lip curl, half smirk and half sneer.

Kakashi breathed for a moment, carefully. He made to pull his mask down, but stopped mid-motion. He set his tea down and turned, very slowly, to look at Obito. Their eyes met, and Obito made sure to keep his smirk in place. Kakashi’s jaw worked beneath the mask, and a deep furrow etched itself between his brows. “I told you to take your time,” Obito murmured.

Kakashi shifted to stand once again, tea now forgotten on the table. He took a few steps toward Obito. Obito straightened, arching a brow in challenge.

There was a puff of displaced air, the only indicator of an ANBU’s entry into the room. It was the tall, stocky one. He landed a few feet ahead of Kakashi, effectively placing himself between the two of them. Obito scoffed. As if he’d ever bothered with that before.

“Kakashi-senpai,” he said in a deep baritone, fully ignoring Obito.

“Bear,” Kakashi acknowledged.

“May we speak?” He glanced back at Obito. “Outside?”

Kakashi’s eyes flickered back to Obito briefly. He was moving an instant later, though, in step behind Bear. They walked out together.

Obito watched them leave, then wandered over to the kitchen table and seized Kakashi’s cup of tea. He inhaled the steam — genmaicha. Toasted rice and green tea. Smelled good enough, and the heat would go to waste with Kakashi outside. If Bear was planning to discuss what he’d seen last night, they were going to be out there for quite some time. Obito took a sip, found the tea to his liking, and kept on drinking. The heat felt good in his throat, like tempered fire.

He finished Kakashi’s tea in due course, and set the empty glass on the end table. Shortly after he’d
done so, Kakashi opened the door. He caught sight of Obito, glared at him (and the empty mug of tea), and exhaled in one slow, measured breath.

“I’ve got a meeting,” he said quietly.

“Hope they let you do it standing,” Obito laughed.

Kakashi’s glare turned frigid in an instant. He whirled and walked out.

It seemed like he stayed gone for as long as he possibly could. Obito was startled awake late into the night with an unsatisfactory few hours of shallow sleep behind him. His eyes opened abruptly, and he tensed for a moment in the oppressive darkness; he could barely see anything, yet he could feel Kakashi’s nearness. And Kakashi was near. Obito could feel warm breath stirring over his skin—and realized he could smell alcohol on it. He opened his mouth to point this out, to level Kakashi with the derision he deserved, when he felt a palm shoved unceremoniously over his mouth. He bit it. Kakashi hissed, and Obito felt the couch cushion sink on either side of him as Kakashi’s knees moved to bracket his hips.

Kakashi’s hand migrated down from his mouth, skimming along his neck. At that, Obito seized his wrist firmly, the skin-to-skin contact ringing through the quiet room. He’d felt the first stirrings of the bite reacting to the touch against his neck, and wanted absolutely no part of it. Instead of withdrawing once caught, though, Kakashi leaned more heavily onto him. His other hand slid beneath the fold of Obito’s robes, skimming over his chest. This hand held something, Obito noted, as he continued to squeeze Kakashi’s trapped wrist harder. As a result, what was likely meant to be some kind of ill-advised caress ended up being clumsy and awkward. Kakashi, unbalanced, didn’t move from atop him.

Obito waited a beat before releasing Kakashi’s wrist. Kakashi straightened a little, bracing his freed arm against the couch. The hand that had curled against Obito’s chest unfurled. Kakashi whispered something Obito didn’t catch.

“What?” he demanded.

Something small and plastic slid down the side of Obito’s chest. He grabbed for it instinctively, unsure of what it was. His hand closed around it—some little tube with a cap.

Kakashi hesitated for a moment before murmuring, “Again?”

Obito scoffed. Kakashi would still be tender from last night. Obito knew that much from experience. But he was here nevertheless, wanting, and Obito wasn’t about to deny him.

He undid his belt and let his robe fall open.
Chapter 19

Chapter Summary

When honour becomes a burden.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He met Senpai on the worst day of his life.

He’d made Jounin five years to the day after the Kyuubi razed the city to the ground, and his first mission went just about as badly as any in recorded history.

His memory of it was fragmented at the best of times. He could remember Kojiro, his best friend, crawling toward him, one hand clawing into the leaves and dirt for traction while the other hand lay some twenty feet back. There was a river of blood between here and there, and he had sat frozen, paralyzed by the sight of it, by the rapidly growing pallor of his friend’s face. They’d looked at one another for a moment, held in a spot of silence amidst the chaos around them. Then, summoning strength from some hidden place, Kojiro hurled himself on top of him, while he tumbled backward easily in his stunned state.

He caught the first flash of an exploding tag on the trunk of the tree above him as he lay looking skyward. Everything went white then. All he could feel was heat, and all he could hear was ringing.

He came to with a jolt, inhaling hard through his lungs and struggling to draw breath. He smelled and could almost taste freshly cooked meat.

He gagged as he realized the source of that smell. Kojiro lay heavy atop him, limp and still, skin smoking.

When the weight shifted off of him suddenly, he thought for one delirious moment that he had it wrong, that Kojiro was still somehow alive. Then as Kojiro’s shoulder rolled to the side, he could see the truth: he was utterly surrounded by the enemy. He was fairly sure they were speaking to him—or about him—but all he heard were faint muffled notes beneath the high whine blaring through his skull. He was frozen, disoriented and exposed, nauseous from the disequilibrium and the stench of shit and burnt hair. The faint cooling from the breeze told him his ears were wet from blood. He lifted a hand, a paltry, primitive defense against the glinting metal trained on him, and mourned the fact that he was about to die just a month after his seventeenth birthday.
Even with his eardrums ruptured, he felt the loud chirping rattling in his skull even before he registered the blue-white light. A lithe blur leaped into the fray, scorching through the enemy soldiers, moving quick and easy until it was the only thing left standing.

He’d heard tales of Hatake Kakashi the Copy Ninja, of course.

He’d thrown up just then, all over his front, between one dazed blink and the next. Even so, he hadn’t been able to take his eyes off the glowing red streak dancing across the battlefield, the Sharingan in the eye of a non-Uchiha. Despite the dizziness, he watched Hatake work until the enemy was eliminated to a man. He remembered crying--his emotions a confused blend of relieved and overwhelmed and disoriented, a feeling he could only seem to articulate with a slow alternating drip of tears. He didn’t remember anything after that.

He would wake later in the hospital, surprised to see the legend himself sitting nearby, his one visible eye dark-ringed and tired-looking. Half-covered by the mask, he couldn’t quite determine Hatake’s expression, but his mind cobbled together enough cues from the patch of skin he could see, and what he read there was grim. He could only stare as one of the village’s most famed ninja approached his bedside and spoke to him, mask stretching along his jaw. He squinted, turning his head in an effort to catch the sound. Nothing was registering. Hatake had blinked for a moment, smiled (at least his one eye seemed to smile) sheepishly, and he switched easily to the simplified sign language shinobi used on stealth missions. His expression sombered.

*Sorry,* he signed. *Your team--dead*.

He’d assumed as much, of course, but he’d hoped against hope he might be wrong. Hatake had lingered awkwardly in the doorway for a moment as he lay there sobbing, perceiving only a dull moan even though his throat burned like acid. Hatake slipped out between one gasp and the next, leaving him to weather the pain of the loss.

His eardrums healed eventually, though he only managed to regain a fraction of his hearing. He was fit with hearing aids and cleared to resume training, but he committed himself to learning the entire signed lexicon to fluency anyway. It took longer to re-establish his sense of balance, but he knew how to be resourceful. Within another few months he was approved for active duty, but found to his frustration that he hadn’t been assigned to a team. On the Hokage’s order, it seemed, he was only good enough to perform as a substitute. He’d tried not to let his frustration show, and if he swung harder than most, even developed a reputation for injuring his sparring partners, nobody said anything.

He hadn’t expected to be selected for ANBU. One morning in the midst of a conditioning session,
he’d been summoned to the Hokage’s office, unsure of what to expect, and was still somehow stunned to find Hatake Kakashi waiting for him alongside Sandaime-sama. His identity was obvious despite the Hound mask, just as it had been all those months ago.

Building a new squad, Hatake-san—no, Hound-san signed.

The Third had raised a brow and offered a half-smile.

“And you want me?” He’d asked aloud, disbelieving. He still remembered the way it felt when Sandaime Hokage-same had chuckled softly at his bewildered tone.

“Who better?” Hound-san replied, affecting a slight shrug. He held out another polycarbonate mask with a rounder shape and different markings to his own. “I’m thinking ‘Bear’.”

He’d heard things about Hound, of course. Everyone had. He’d been called friend-killer, eye-thief. The last known member of the Hatake clan. The last survivor of an ill-fated squad. They now had that latter part in common, he supposed. He wondered how many of the other rumours were true. He thought of the warrior with the lightning hand and the blazing eye, how he cut his opponents down like poetry in motion.

I want that, he realized. He never wanted to feel weak again.

He thought of the man who felt compelled to relay the terrible news of his squad's fate personally. Who was here now, offering him a new chance at life.

He reached out and took the mask.

He took the codename Bear on easily, and the mask fit him like he had always been meant to wear it. Within a few months, he was joined by Mink, Badger, and Eagle. The four of them never became part of the more famous team Ro—they weren’t prodigies like Tenzo or Uchiha Itachi, after all, just talented ninja kids who were thrilled at the prospect of training under a legend, happy to call him their Senpai. They went on to work with him as his primary team in the year following the Uchiha massacre, before he inexplicably resigned to instruct genin. Perhaps it wasn’t so inexplicable, though; Itachi and Senpai had been close, after a fashion at least, and the betrayal must have been hard to stomach.
The team itself disbanded when Senpai left, but the four of them stayed on with the ANBU, having made a pact to keep Hound-senpai’s legacy alive the best way they knew how. Even once he’d left them, they carried on the tradition of near-perfect mission statistics, tidy execution with minimal casualties. They’d managed excellently, by anyone’s measuring.

When Senpai called on them years later for this, this very personal mission, none of them thought twice about agreeing. Bear had been the first to accept. What little Senpai had mentioned of Obito during their past together--and what he’d gleaned through Konoha’s prolific rumour mill--told him that this was a mission Hatake Kakashi didn’t fully trust himself to handle on his own. That fact should’ve worried him a lot more, in retrospect.

It would have been impossible to imagine just months ago that he’d be preparing a second damning report against the captain he’d respected so much, the man who’d saved his life. It felt wrong to be standing in front of the Hokage’s office, but strict rules had been put in place for a reason, rules outlined by Senpai himself and approved by Tsunade-sama. If Senpai ever became compromised, she would have to be notified. The orders were clear on that fact. And he was compromised. There was no other way to describe what they’d seen--what had continued to evolve, day by day.

He’d been stunned into silence the first time an altercation in the apartment turned sexual. Uchiha was pure poison as far as he could see, nothing at all like the dead hero Senpai had obsessively paid respect to for all those years, yet they’d crashed together that night as though drawn in by gravity. Bear remembered Mink’s gasp of shock as the two of them crouched there tense and on high alert, ready to intervene the moment the prisoner tried anything at all. It could barely have been called a fight. Senpai had had Uchiha pinned, fully checked, but in an instant everything changed. Everything about what they were doing keeping a war criminal in a civilian apartment, what Senpai had intended, was thrown into question. There’d be no coming back from it.

Sick to his stomach, Bear had gone to brief the Hokage in the morning. He just couldn’t shake the fact that it felt like a betrayal, like he was divulging the dirty secrets of the man he owed so much. He felt like the worst kohai on earth. It had just been the once, after all--probably some frustrated amalgam of years of devotion, newly bruised by weeks of hurt and frustration. Kakashi-senpai was a sensible man, if a very lonely one. He’d surely come to his senses.

Bear had the sense to realize that these were desperate excuses he was making. Orders were orders. Reluctantly, he did his duty and reported to the Hokage what had happened. The look on Tsunade-sama’s face that day left him ill at ease. The tightening of her lips told him that this was less a surprise and more an outcome she’d already considered.

But that was then. He wasn’t sure what she’d say now. He felt like he’d failed his mission, but the unavoidable truth was that if Hokage-sama knew, knew what was going on inside that apartment and chose not to put a stop to it… then this was the mission.
Unwanted in the depths of his mind, he could still hear Senpai’s scream of helpless pleasure from last night, the volume of it as it rang through the silence, and the raw honesty that it carried. A sound like that was impossible to fake, and therefore impossible to forget.

That full-throated howl jarred him from his horrified, frozen state. Bear had felt Kakashi-senpai’s chakra flaring, triggering the wards he had set in place himself. Right at the outset, they’d agreed upon a failsafe in case of an unanticipated move from Uchiha. If Senpai’s chakra were disrupted within the apartment, the wards would signal any ANBU within a two-kilometer radius to respond. And respond they did, rushing in toward the apartment like ants converging on fallen food.

Bear had hastily cancelled the signal, touched two fingers to his tattoo and called off the attack--before even realizing what he was doing. The other three had stared at him, uncertain, as Senpai’s ragged breath echoed through their headsets, wafted right through the vents. He’d stared back at them, surprised at himself.

Now, five hours later, he was still unsure if he’d made the right decision.

A sound alerted him and he looked up. Shizune-san rounded the curved hallway. She looked tired. “Operative Bear?”

He nodded.

“She’s ready for you,” she said quietly.

Bear swallowed, following her lead through the heavy wooden door.

Tsunade-sama, of course, didn’t look a year over twenty-five, yet, like Shizune-san, something about her emanated pure fatigue. That appeared to be a running theme. She sat with her elbows resting on the desk, her fingers steepled and resting against her lips. As they entered, she leaned back some, then nodded to Shizune-san, who gave her a long look before returning the way she came and shutting the door behind them. The soft sound of the door closing still ran through Bear like an earthquake.

Belatedly, he remembered to drop to one knee and bow his head. He looked up again when she coughed pointedly.
She folded her arms in irritation. Bear was thankful for his mask; it saved him the embarrassment of asking his highest-ranked superior for forgiveness as his eyes darted instinctually to the exaggerated swell of her already ample cleavage. He forced his gaze back up and fought the urge to clear his throat. He was a married man, he berated himself. One on a mission, no less.

“Hokage-sama--”

“--It’s not even six in the morning, Operative Bear, so I can only assume you’re here with bad news.”

He sucked in a breath opened his mouth to begin.

“Gods, and it’s too early for a drink. Even for me,” she lamented, cutting him off. “I’m not sure how things could be going worse at Hatake’s place, but I’m guessing you’re about to tell me. Get up.”

Bear’s head fell a little, but he obeyed, clambering quickly to his feet. “The details of my first report remain the same, Hokage-sama, but they’ve continued with the activity, and the… context… is changing.” He didn’t know how to say this. His ears were ringing faintly now, and he resisted the urge to adjust his hearing aids.

“Of course it is,” she sighed, frowning. “How do you mean?”

He looked around the room—anywhere but at her. Of course, the last four Hokage all stared him down from their portraits, expressions seeming just a little sterner than neutral. He swallowed around a suddenly dry throat. “They’ve, ah… They’ve been physical… fourteen times since then.” He could see Tsunade-sama’s groomed eyebrows drawing closer together, but he pressed on. If he stopped, he wasn’t sure he’d be able to articulate the rest. “Last night, Hatake-senpai approached Uchiha Obito.”

She sighed. “And?”

Bear’s jaw worked behind the mask. “Ma’am, Senpai has had the physical upper hand until last night. He’s been the one, uh--”

“--You can say topping, Operative,” the Hokage said testily. “We’re all adults here.”
“Yes, Hokage-sama,” Bear agreed. That didn’t make him any less uncomfortable. “He’s been the one topping whenever they got together… but not last night. Last night he let Uchiha take control. Full control.”

Tsunade-sama threw something delicate at the wall, where it shattered into a fine powder. Bear flinched.

“This is what I get for waxing sentimental,” she seethed. “Every order, as long as I’ve known him, he’s obeyed. Naturally, this is the one time he gets rebellious. You go get him and you bring him here.”

“Yes, Hokage-sama. I just… the ethics of it--” Bear blurted, then berated himself for speaking out of turn.

Tsunade-sama only laughed unpleasantly. “What ethics!? Kid, the ethics have gone out the window. The ethics are way behind us, lost to compromise because of Naruto and Kakashi’s damned foolish optimism.” Then her features settled back to that blend of fatigue and irritation. “Have you discussed this with anyone?”

“Of course not; I took it straight to you, ma’am.”

She waved a hand, accepting and dismissing it at once. “Too many people already know. I’ve got one more question for you.”

He wanted to fidget, but settled for shifting his weight slightly instead. “Ma’am?”

“Has Uchiha shown any unusual abilities?”

He frowned. “I’m… how do you mean?” Eagle’s words from earlier ran through his mind. As did the term Mink had used: subspace.

“Accelerated healing, any chakra manipulation whatsoever, anything unusual at all.” Her golden-brown gaze was intent.
"O-operative Eagle said he saw their chakras oscillating in sync," Bear told her. "With his Byakugan."

She sat up a little straighter at that. Her eyes glittered keenly. "When, exactly?"

He thought back, and he could see it clearly. "When they were looking into each other's eyes. In the middle of--"

She sighed, saving him from having to say it aloud. "I don't need to tell you that this is under the highest level of confidentiality. We're sitting on a landmine here. If this information leaks, it could destroy the fragile peace between the five great nations. It could incite civil war right here in Konoha. Keep your soldiers in line," she said. "Put Uchiha down at the first sign of a threat. And bring Kakashi to me today; I'd like to have a chat. Dismissed."

He bowed low and shunshin-ed away as quickly as was respectful. His knees almost buckled in gratitude as he touched down atop the roof outside. Gods. He owed Kakashi-senpai everything, but this had long crossed the limits of the ridiculous.

He was yawning by the time he made it back to Senpai's apartment, and he lingered outside a minute longer than necessary before forcing himself to return to his post. Badger was gone from the crawlspace. Mink and Eagle remained, and turned toward him apprehensively as he returned.

"Badger went home. He's still asleep," Mink murmured, meaning Kakashi-senpai; the monitors clearly showed that he was right where Bear had last seen him, in his bed, curled into a looser version of the fetal position, covered almost to his forehead beneath the green shuriken blanket.

"Uchiha, too," Eagle supplied, tapping the monitor next to it, which showed the living room with one Uchiha Obito sprawled lazily over the couch. Eagle, however, was staring straight at a blank wall, veins bulging along the edge of his mask. He was watching Uchiha directly.

"You'll burn out your chakra like that," Bear warned him.

Bear hesitated. “Not exactly, no.”

He could feel the frustrated sigh Eagle made.

“So what, are we just supposed to keep watching? Let them keep going at each other?” Mink demanded incredulously. “This isn’t exactly healthy for either of them. Or for us.”

“Hokage-sama is going to talk to Senpai,” Bear said. That wasn’t the comfort he imagined it might be. “I’m to bring him to her… whenever he wakes up.” He blinked blearily, words trailing off into a yawn.

“Eagle and I are on duty, Bear-taichou,” Mink reminded him gently, patting his shoulder. “Your shift is technically over. Nothing’s happening. You can rest until Senpai wakes up.”

Bear scarcely heard her last few words; sleep was already dragging him down.

He was shaken awake after what felt like mere moments. “They’re up and moving,” Eagle said, indicating the monitors. Senpai was just out of frame, but quickly reappeared in the bathroom camera, shuffling gingerly toward the shower, still tightly wrapped in that shuriken sheet. He let the water run for several minutes while he stood there, staring at the bottom of the shower basin. Finally, he dropped the blanket and stepped in, and Bear averted his eyes. He stretched (as much as he was able to, given the spatial constraints) and began to prepare himself for a discussion he did not want to have. He would’ve preferred to wait until Senpai had had a bit to eat, but predictably, as soon as his two charges were within a few feet of one another, Uchiha began to antagonize. Bear leapt down and steered Senpai outside before things could escalate.

Once outside Kakashi-senpai shut the door and immediately leaned heavily against the frame. The mask obscured more than half his face, and yet couldn’t quite hide the trapped, miserable look in his eye. “How urgent was her summons?” he asked hollowly, wrapping his arms around himself in a rare outward display of vulnerability.

“She said ‘today’,” Bear replied. “She didn’t say ‘immediately’.”

Senpai sighed, his whole body bending with the breath. “What time is it?”

“One forty-five PM,” Bear replied.
Senpai blinked for a second, and Bear could see him check the angle of their shadows to confirm what he’d said. “So it is,” he agreed quietly.

He turned to head back in, but Bear reached out--instinctively but *unwisely*--to grab his forearm. As Kakashi-senpai stiffened, Bear did too, anticipating a strike. It was more than stupid to grab someone like him unexpectedly. He could feel muscles tensing into steel cords, then almost immediately going slack with a palpable resignation. Senpai turned to look at him.

“What is it?”

“Sir,” Bear started hesitantly.

“‘Kakashi’ is enough.”

“Not for my commanding officer,” Bear protested, frowning.

The fabric of Senpai’s mask warped, a grimace only partially hidden. “Don’t you think I’ve lost the right?”

Bear, taken aback, took a long time to answer, turning those words over uselessly in his brain. By the time he opened his mouth to reply, Kakashi-senpai had dropped his gaze and was shaking his head.

“Sir--”

“**Kakashi.**”

Bear chewed his lip uncertainly. “**Kakashi-san?**”

Senpai made a frustrated sound. “Bear, *please*. I’ve lost the right.”

“I… **Kakashi,**” Bear tried, hating how it sounded without the honorific. “How are we supposed to
proceed now? There are no new orders. There’s no protocol for any of this. Tell me. Please. How do we protect you? What is it you want?”

That lone eye closed for a long moment.

“How do we protect you?” Bear repeated, frustrated.

That earned him a short, mirthless laugh. “Let’s get going. Hokage-sama’s been waiting long enough.” Those words carried an air of finality which wasn’t lost on Bear. He turned, tugged his arm from Bear’s grip, and stepped inside to announce his departure. Bear didn’t catch Uchiha’s retort--his pulse thrumming in his own ears drowned out the sound--but he could tell it’d hit home, because Kakashi-senpai stalked out of the house stiff and indignant.

They ran together to the Hokage’s offices at an easy clip at Bear’s insistence; Senpai tried to push the pace, but Bear kept it slow and steady. He’d seen what Uchiha had done to his mentor’s body. There was no way a dead sprint would feel like anything but torture for Senpai just now, and he was not going to be responsible for the man hurting himself any more than he’d already done. Plus. Winter rooftops were slippery, even for elite ninja.

They still arrived in good time, not winded in the least. Senpai stared resolutely ahead as they walked the hallway leading to Tsunade-sama’s office, hands beginning to ball into fists as they approached the door. Shizune opened the door before Kakashi-senpai had the chance to knock. She looked between the two of them and ushered Senpai in. “Dismissed, Operative Bear,” he heard Hokage-sama’s voice declare, even before he’d crossed the threshold. He barely had time to bow before the door was closing in his face with a final-sounding click.

He blinked at the door for a moment before stepping back and turning to go. He quickened his pace as he heard Tsunade’s raised voice begin to ring down the hall.

He was grateful for Mink and Eagle’s day-long post. He’d been planning to spend the day with his wife--they hadn’t even been married half a year yet, and by this point he’d been on Uchiha duty for more than half that time. They used to spend all his non-mission time together, but lately he could count himself lucky if he had a handful of hours a week to offer her. Since the situation in the apartment began to unravel, he’d been spending in excess of thirty-six hours at a time on duty, and their relationship was starting to feel the strain.
On his way home, his head was still nodding with fatigue, but he steered himself to the Yamanaka flower shop—he made an extra point to patronize the shop since they lost Inoichi-san in the war—to grab a bouquet for his wife. He’d gotten to know the Yamanakas as he’d dated Masako; her family’s civilian grocery had been on the same commercial street as their shop before the village was destroyed. In the new layout, they were now two blocks apart, but Masako and Yamanaka Ino (who she’d babysat as a child) remained close.

Ino was at the counter when he shuffled in. She looked up and smiled in recognition, though he remarked, and not for the first time, that her smiles came slower and more reluctantly since the war. He was going for his usual medium-priced pre-made bouquets when her voice stopped him.

“Friendly word of advice, Bear-kun,” she called. I’m your senior, he thought, but shrugged it off easily. This kid had successfully ambushed Uchiha Obito on the battlefield, for crying out loud.

“What’s that, Ino-chan?” he asked with a slightly forced note of pleasantness.

“I had lunch with Masako a few hours ago. You’re going to need a bigger bouquet.”

He gulped.

Ten minutes later he was back on his way home, arms laden with a bouquet twice the size he would normally buy, hurrying to protect the blossoms from the punishing cold. He mentally mapped out the restaurants they could visit tonight for dinner before his evening shift. By the time he made it to their condo, however, he could smell something absolutely delicious wafting from the open window.

He awkwardly fished for his keys and let himself in.

“Home, babe,” he called as he entered. There was no reply, even though he could clearly sense her nearby in the house, even though several lights were on. His heart gave an unpleasant twist in his chest, but he kept the smile on his face. “Masako?”

“Living room,” he heard her say.

Their place wasn’t that big; it was a scant few steps from the genkan to the main living space. He
kicked off his shoes and rounded the corner. Over the lily blossoms in his arms, he could see her, legs curled under the kotatsu, nursing a cup of tea.

“I brought flowers,” he said uselessly, as she looked over at the blooms he carried. There was a bit of a pause before her eyes made their way to his.

“They’re lovely,” she said, setting her tea down and shifting back from the kotatsu to stand. She took a few steps toward him, but even as she approached he could feel a measure of stubborn distance between them that he hated. She took the bouquet from him. “Weren’t you supposed to be home this morning? You said your shift ended at midnight.”

“I know, but--”

“But you can’t tell me anything about it, right?” She cut him off.

“No, babe, I can’t. I’m sorry,” he said quickly, hating that he couldn’t. Just now, he was holding on to so much, he felt like he might explode. He looked at her, pleading silently for her to understand.

She just shook her head. “And you’re back on duty this evening. How long are you going to do this? You’re almost never home. It’s just a good thing I know you too well to suspect you of cheating, but…” she trailed off to a sigh. “Let me go put these in some water. I already cooked and ate dinner, but there’s a plate in the microwave waiting on you.”

He made a belated attempt to reach for her, but she’d already stepped back. He took his mask off and scrubbed his hands over his face and through his hair. *I’m sorry* just wasn’t going to cut it. She wasn’t even cleared to know *where* he was assigned to spend his days, far less what kind of mess he’d gotten tangled up in.

He followed her into the kitchen, where she was filling a vase under the faucet. He opened the microwave door and found she’d made tonkatsu-don, one of his all-time favourites. “Looks amazing, Masako. Thanks,” he said.

“The cutlets are better fresh from the fryer,” she replied with a tightness in her voice that wrenched at him. She put the flowers into the water and set them on the kitchen counter.

He set the microwave to warm the food then turned around to gather her into his arms. “I’m sorry,”
he repeated, knowing that the words were weak. “This isn’t how I wanted our first year of marriage to go. I’m sorry I’ve been away. I… I know this isn’t fair to you.” He pressed his lips to the crown of her head, so he could feel it when the tension bled out of her body.

“First the war, and now this. Isn’t there someone else who can take over your mission?” She asked quietly. “I don’t know how we can expect to start a family if you’re gone ninety-nine percent of the time.”

That gutted him. “I couldn’t be there for you like you’d need right now,” he muttered into her hair. He didn’t want to be failing two important people in his life.

“No,” she sighed. “You couldn’t.”

The microwave beeped.

She gently extricated herself from his hold and went to retrieve the plate. “Let’s sit together for a while at least, hm? I’ll bring this to the kotatsu. Grab a pair of chopsticks and something to drink.” She flashed him a faint smile then headed for the living room. He watched her go and distinctly felt the last of her warmth fading from his arms.

He wolfed down his meal sitting at her side. They didn’t discuss much else, opting to watch TV in silence. He was just glad she was allowing him near. For a moment, things felt settled. He was home where he belonged, by her side where he belonged. It didn’t take him long at all to fade back to sleep like that, warm and full at home with Masako near.

He was bitterly disappointed to wake up hours later, in a darkened living room with a pillow under his head and the kotatsu tabletop cleared. It was an awkward angle to lie at--really just slumped forward with his legs half-folded under the table. His, neck, back, and knees were stiff as he straightened up laboriously. Masako had probably gone to bed. He was just about twice her size, and she was a civilian on top of that, so she could hardly have been expected to get him up and take him to bed with her. He groaned as he stood and stretched, only realizing belatedly that the sound was muffled. He tugged out his dead hearing aids and dipped into the bathroom to get his second pair from their charger. Bear had no idea what time it was, only that as he entertained the idea of joining his wife in bed, the ANBU tattoo on his left deltid began to throb. He groaned again. It was later than he’d thought.

Sure enough, as he returned to the living room, a shadow shifted just outside the window, obscuring the moonlight. Bear went to the window and opened it.
“Ready for more of this mess?” Badger asked by way of greeting.

“No,” Bear told him honestly, thinking of Masako’s hair in the moonlight, and of the life he’d imagined for them that was slipping through his fingers.

“Something got decided, though,” Badger announced, sounding satisfied.

“What do you mean?” Bear frowned, belatedly realizing he was maskless; Badger’s head was cocking a little at his expression.

He handed Bear a scroll.

Bear took it from him, muttering, “Uh, come in,” belatedly. “I still need to shower.” He stepped aside from the window to let Badger in. The wind was punishingly cold, and the kid didn’t seem to like to use doors. As Badger clambered into his living room, Bear examined the scroll. “Shit,” he cursed.

“Whoa, man, language,” Badger laughed in surprise, throwing up his hands in mock alarm. “I think that’s the first time I’ve heard you swear.”

Bear didn’t answer; his response was warranted. In Tsunade-sama’s own hand, the scroll held a confidential kill order for Uchiha Obito. They’d been given authority to override Kakashi-senpai if Bear deemed it necessary—even take Senpai down if he acted against the interests of the village. The executive decision now lay with him. He had always been a good soldier, always executed his orders to the letter. But this… this was just one more thing he didn’t want to have on his head. He folded the scroll back up and pocketed it.

“This is good news,” Badger insisted. “No more sitting idly by.”

Bear sighed for what felt like the millionth time. “Hmm. Let me get ready to go. Five minutes, okay? Grab some water in the kitchen if you want.”

Badger seemed dissatisfied with his answer. “Yeah, okay,” he said.
Bear left him and headed to his room where his wife sat up in bed, blinking sleepily. “Didn’t want to wake you,” she murmured, probably referencing his unceremonious nap on the kotatsu.

“I’m sorry I woke you just now,” he told her, leaning in to steal a kiss. “I’ve got to go again. I’ll be home as soon as I can.”

“Mm, promises, promises,” she yawned. If she’d meant it playfully, she came up just short of it. She lay back down, watching him from the corner of her eye as he retrieved a fresh uniform from his closet.

“I love you,” he told her.

Her reply was so faint that even his fresh hearing aids couldn’t pick it up.

He showered quickly, shaved, and pulled on his tactical gear. His mind was racing, a layer of fresh disquiet overlying everything.

This wasn’t good news at all, he thought, fitting the mask back on over his face. *This isn't right. You saved my life, but I can't seem to do a thing to make sure you don't ruin your own.* He may have been naïve in many ways, but he knew one thing for certain. Killing Uchiha Obito, even under duress, would cost them their former captain, too.

There was a soft clatter from the kitchen where Badger was setting down his glass. The night was frigid as anything, so he and Badger made short work of the journey to Kakashi-senpai’s apartment. Mink and Eagle looked relieved to be let go, but before she left, Mink grabbed his forearm.

“Senpai’s still not back,” she said. That wasn’t like him. Barring a long mission, Kakashi-senpai was *always* in before midnight. “Uchiha’s asleep on the couch again.”

Bear nodded and settled in to another night’s watch, envious of Mink and Eagle’s retreating chakra signatures. Good soldiers didn’t complain, especially over a duty they’d leapt at the chance to fulfill. Still, it was a cold night, he missed his wife, and Tsunade’s orders sat heavy in his utility pouch. And even though he’d been given full executive power, he felt utterly powerless when Hatake Kakashi stumbled home two hours later, clearly drunk out of his mind. He felt trapped and miserable hearing the sounds, wet and animal, through his headset, duty-bound to monitor the two figures on infrared cam, their heat signatures rising, as they undulated together on the couch.

Chapter End Notes
SO sorry this entry took so long, guys! Work is ramping up to a fever pitch, and I've had exams on top of it :( This chapter was a bit of a challenge to get out, but I'm happy with it, finally. The story's going to take a bit of a turn as we enter the final act of the Diplopia arc. For any readers still hanging around, THANK YOU for putting up with my irregular updates. Truly.
Chapter 20

Chapter Summary

It's a harsh winter for Konoha's post-war electrical grid.

He dreamed of darkness, of a cold black snowy night and fields of snow stretching to every horizon. He walked in that dark, in a direction that seemed arbitrary at best, trudging through drifts up to his knees. His toes and fingertips felt numb, his nose and lips not far behind, but he kept moving, his core warm—even hot, protecting his vitality. A plume of warmth coiled around his neck and held him steady as he marched toward an uncertain dawn.

He woke with a start to a weight lurching over him. Instinct and memory had his heart leaping into his throat, vocal cords tensing against a scream that he could only barely suppress. He only just held it—and the surge of bile that followed—back, mastering himself as he remembered where he was. He shivered a little with the realization that the cold hadn’t only been a dream. His face and extremities were freezing, the skin of his neck rapidly cooling, as if breath had been warming it mere moments before. His lap was hot by comparison, hips and belly and thighs pressed snug against something warm, his soft cock nestled somewhere warmer.

It dawned on him, slowly and with the languor of a sleep abruptly interrupted, that that warm weight, that tight heat was Kakashi, who’d passed out that way after climbing on top of him in the dark. That alcohol-heavy breath coiling against his neck had been Kakashi’s. Memory crept back to him, memory of that heat engulfing him, the determined, irregular motion of Kakashi’s body, the soft groans that seemed to come more easily as they collided again and again.

That heat rolled off him suddenly, forcing a grunt from the back of Obito’s throat as his cock slid out from the warm hold of Kakashi’s body and encountered a cold so sharp it almost felt like blades. He hissed in displeasure, hands darting down to cup himself. Meanwhile, Kakashi’s lurch continued, clumsy and halting, peeling his whole person off Obito’s hips, pulling at skin where come had cooled and dried. Kakashi overbalanced. A bony knee rammed into Obito’s side as he stumbled, waking him up fully as Kakashi toppled into the coffee table with a crash.

Obito would’ve laughed at him, but his side ached and his teeth were chattering. He hurried to yank his robe out from under him—it was disgustingly damp in places, but he was desperate for any protection from the air all of a sudden. He threw it over himself like a blanket and tucked his feet under the hem to warm them.

“What did you do to the thermostat?” he demanded instead. “Did you leave a window open?” As a
side effect of their intended purpose, the wards trapped some of the air within their bounds, and some of the heat as well. It should have never gotten this cold inside the apartment.

He didn’t get much of a reply. Squinting in the gloom, he could see Kakashi get to his feet stiffly, waver where he stood, then stumble to the bathroom in the dark. Obito heard the toilet lid come up with a loud clatter, and then a retch with wet splashes that made him wrinkle his nose.

Kakashi retched again and again, and Obito, now listening intently, heard it when he slumped back, heard another uncharacteristic “Ugh, fuck,” and a sigh that shook like laughter, but ended on something far closer to a sob. Obito’s mind was already turning, thinking how can I use this, but also pondering what the hell Tsunade could have said or done to Kakashi to have him slipping so far off the rails. Rationally, Obito had expected more push-back from Kakashi after his encounter with the Hokage. Instead he’d gotten a drunk lapful of a man spiralling rapidly out of control. He frowned. He didn’t like unpredictable people. They were far harder to manage.

(But the pull and drag of Kakashi’s body against his had felt amazing last night.)

The faucet was running now; overlaid with the swishing sounds of a toothbrush. The bathroom light wasn’t on--it was just shy of pitch black in the apartment, no glow of street lights filtering in through the windows. Obito blinked. Had the electricity gone out?

He cast around on the floor for the blanket he normally used; it had been the first casualty of Kakashi’s drunken advances. His fingers skimmed over one side of a pair of closed-toed winter shoes, still damp from outside, and what felt like Kakashi’s pants. The flak jacket and weapons pouch were nowhere to be found. At least Kakashi had learned one lesson, he thought wryly.

The blanket was out of reach from the couch. Obito grumbled to himself and swung a leg down, cringing as the cold assaulted it. He wrapped the robe around his body, unsure and uncaring whether it was inside out or not. He cursed a blue streak under his breath, until he found himself forced to stand shivering, feeling around on the floor with his feet until he felt the familiar not-soft-enough texture of the ratty throw. He began to tug it over himself when he felt resistance from the other side of the blanket. Was it caught on something?

“Obito,” Kakashi said hoarsely, voice near again, close enough to be holding the opposite end of the blanket in his hand.

“Give the fucking blanket back,” Obito snapped. “It’s freezing in here. Fine day to forget your electrical bill.” He yanked on his edge of the blanket harder. It wasn’t thick enough. He would be in for a miserable night no matter what he did.
The windows were piled with snow almost half their height, only adding to the heavy darkness in the living room and kitchen. There was no sound from outside. All he could seem to hear was Kakashi’s breathing.

“Obito,” Kakashi whispered, still slurring the edge of his syllables.

“What.”

“My room. Please.” His dark silhouette shivered, looked miserable even in the low light. Naked and cold.

What? Obito repeated internally. What was Kakashi asking of him?

“Isscold,” Kakashi mumbled, teeth chattering audibly. On that, at least, they could agree. Obito missed his fire, the Katon he’d inherited from his family. He hadn’t thought about his lost power in a while, beyond the barely-there grasp of his Sharingan when he and Kakashi fucked. Tonight, he would be willing to kill—commit genocide (again) if need be, for a blast of fire.

Kakashi tugged on his end of the blanket again, wrapping it around his wrist and tugging it closer, forcing Obito to take a step forward. He sighed, a shiver causing the sound to stutter out of his lungs. He followed Kakashi’s pull, tracing his steps in the apartment by memory alone.

He skimmed his hand over the wall in the hallway to keep himself steady. In doing so, his fingers slid over the divot in the wall Kakashi had punched months ago. All at once, he remembered Kakashi’s brutal swing, the raikiri screaming just millimeters from his cheek. He was following the same man’s lead in utter darkness now, holding on to a ratty blanket and resigning himself to yet another uncertain fate.

He stopped walking, suddenly unsure. “What are you doing?” he demanded. That was becoming his go-to line as Kakashi tried to drag him off to his bedroom. Kakashi only tugged on the blanket again, gentle but insistent, prompting Obito to step forward and abandon the hole in the wall and the contemplation that it triggered.

There was moonlight, at least, through Kakashi’s larger bedroom window. Obito remarked it as he stepped through Kakashi’s doorway.
“I’m not in the mood to talk,” he warned.

The slope of Kakashi’s now-visible shoulders revealed how spent he was. “Me neither, Obito. Please just…”


“So are you,” Kakashi countered, shuddering against the cold. “…So am I,” he admitted.

“You don’t have a jutsu to warm your hands? Your cold little ass?”

“Obito,” Kakashi repeated a third time, trying hard to enunciate, though alcohol still carried on his breath, fainter now over the mint of his toothpaste. He tripped over a few consonants, and the shivering blurred the rest. “I’m asking. More than asking. Please.”

Obito had taken a step forward before he was even aware of his body moving.

It seemed like a transgression, like he was crossing an invisible barrier. Had he set these limits, or had Kakashi? The details seemed less relevant now; the sweat on his skin had cooled, his fingers and toes were quickly getting to the painful side of numb. He’d be in for a miserable night on the couch no matter how many blankets he could scrounge up. At the end of the day, the comforter on the bed was his, wasn’t it? Kakashi, in the height of his pleasure just hours before, had been his as well. He was looking at him now, mismatched eyes glittering in the dark. He didn’t beg. Not exactly. Not with words. The promise of warmth did all the beckoning for him.

If Obito looked at it through a slightly twisted lens, he had full right to everything that was being offered in that bed.

His back was beginning to stiffen up in the cold. The threat of those agonizing spasms did away with the remainder of his hesitation. “Move over,” he said gruffly. Kakashi did as he was told immediately, responsive in a way that piqued Obito’s interest. Maybe he only got that way when he was getting what he wanted. Maybe he was wanting something more.
He shed the filthy robe and sat on the edge of the bed, quickly darting beneath the old green duvet and the insulating sheets and blankets layered beneath it, sighing with relief as the bitter cold abated. He slid over to the far side of the bed, facing the wall despite the unease the close quarters gave him.

The mattress dipped under Kakashi’s weight as he climbed in behind him. The hairs on the back of Obito’s neck rose at the proximity of him. They’d scarcely touched these past months except to fuck or to fight. This simple closeness was new. He had no idea what to do with this.

“All that lightning chakra and you can’t do shit about the power grid?” he scoffed half-heartedly.

A cold nose pressed between his shoulder blades in response.

Obito hissed, and tamped down the reflex to swing back with an elbow. Who the hell did Kakashi think he was?

“I want to--” Kakashi murmured, before giving the thought up and winding an arm over Obito’s waist instead. Frozen, Obito squinted at the shuriken-patterned blanket, just barely catching the way the sheet distorted with Kakashi’s movement.

Obito had a harsh retort on his lips. He did. It died, however, as Kakashi’s body lined up against his, blocking out the last of the cold and bleeding warmth back into Obito’s body. The sheets still smelled of the two of them, something that wasn’t as offensive to Obito’s senses as he would’ve thought. Kakashi’s leg crossed over his at the ankle. The bed was soft, and the soft puffs of breath at his back were warm. His tense muscles relaxed in slow increments, though his mind continued to turn over a thousand half-formed thoughts at once.

“Warm,” Kakashi commented drowsily, tightening his grip a fraction. He sounded almost content.

He was a fool. Kakashi was going to hang himself for want of warmth, for want of Obito.

Obito didn’t care.

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