

Threads of Fate

Sasuke-center

Von Nakuj

Kapitel 3: Chapter 3

*Chasing, chasing
always chasing,
catching stardust,
you light it aflame.*

*You let it die,
so you can live.*

*Your agony is no excuse.
(But is it really ~~dead~~?)*

Dancing eagerly, the stars were falling. Ice and snow appeared to be ripping holes into the darkness of the vast sky above. Strongly, the aimlessly swirling pearls yearned for the ground, yearned for rest. It was cold outside.

His naked feet pushed against the frozen concrete as Sasuke swiftly sprinted through the night. The untaught eye tempted to mistake him for a shadow. A phantom, that only lingered for as long as the blink of an eye.

Among the few roaming souls that crossed his path no one took note of him. Whether or not some skilled shinobi grasped his scurrying figure he could not tell. They did not react to him, however, so he did not tend to them either. It was what he had aimed for and thus a welcome sight that assisted his scheme:

Uncovering this world.
(Is it real?)

He hurried forward whilst hiding under the stars. Crimson red his eyes bled into the whiteness before him. This ice, that had covered his heart oh so long ago. But why was it winter?

He could still feel the lingering touch of sunshine on his skin, the smell of leaves decomposing and the cooling air of autumn winds filling his nostrils. What did it even matter at this point?

Lanterns exploded with light, so bright he had to narrow his eyes. Hasty he leaped into the shadows whilst cautiously adapting for them to curtain his form. What if someone *did* recognize him and reported their encounter? This was not the time for a lone child to be roaming the streets. The head's youngest at that! He needed to cover his identity. Not that his beaming eyes and supposed age didn't reveal him already. The light would expose him even faster. No, this risk he was not willing to take.

(Where is the darkness?)

It had come suddenly, this urge to escape. He didn't listen to it.

(He didn't.)

But still, the air had been heavy, back in that house where everything had started, so heavy he had found himself unable to breath. And with his mother sleeping there, blood reddening her cheeks and not straining the parquet...

He just couldn't let this continue. Someone was playing him, badly, and that Sasuke did not intent to allow any second longer. There had to be an explanation *somewhere*. And the Naka shrine, the place he was heading to, posed to be a good bet to place on. This jutsu had to be related to *some sort* of Genjutsu, after all. With his kind being prodigies in their usage, they probably had useful information covering his situation stored in the clan's meeting place. Being a secret kept safely among his brethren he might as well could give it a try. Not that he had another option available.

But searching was moving and so he ran. Feeling, hurting, living. It didn't matter. Inside his head, inside his soul, it was numb. After all, he was used to it. Stupid little heart of his mistaking it for sorrow. How naive children could be.

Somehow, it all seemed in vain. All that he'd done. All that he did. For it showed no difference, after all.

(Why even bother?)

But the past remained gone and the present had taken over. It shouldn't be fighting to regain its place. It shouldn't chase him like that, like he was some sort of *prey*. The fight between them had lasted many years, being ended only by his brother's death. The moment of acceptance, it had snapped him out of this farce, and showed him what he was unable to realize before.

Despite it all, he had prevailed and thus he was stronger. He had withstood every lie that had been thrown at him and therefore, he had seen the truth. This truth that had proofed to be just one of many.

(But where's the difference?)

He passed his surroundings so rapidly, it felt like one gigantic blur. Colors faded, new ones jumped into existence. He perceived it like the turning of a page that bore no

coherent words. They carried meaning by themselves but together they failed to deliver the message. Like questions that could not be responded to.

Where did he come from? Where did he go to? He hadn't grasped either, so how could he comprehend this being that dwelt inside of him? Just what could explain the agony he had gone through? And what defined his purpose, a *shinobi's* purpose?

There had never been a choice.

*(Eyes filled with pride. Hands covered in blood. Desperate cries of realization. They had been weak. They deserved being beaten. Death takes those who are not able to fight back. It is cruel, perhaps, but that's what life is.
Just accept it already.)*

Isn't that right? His life had never been his.

*(Why am I smiling? I should not—
Oh, he was watching.
Father, are you proud?)*

Before finding answers, no future could exist for there couldn't be life without seeing one's future.

But still he remained standing. For he felt it, the concept that connected it all.

Suffering,
and Hatred.
That's all there is to it.

(Then why do you live?)

Do you know the feeling of accomplishing a complicated task? A task you were afraid of, that kept bugging you day in day out in the back of your head? Of course you do. Who doesn't, right? But despite hardships and worries, the reward you receive after finally reaching your goal makes up for it. Like releasing a breath you've been holding or lying down after being on your feet all day. Finding peace might be a term that deemed a good enough expression of what Fugaku was feeling right then.

He had never been a person who particularly enjoyed drinking. It depended on the occasion, really, but under normal circumstances you wouldn't find him in a *pub* of all places.

Still he found himself sitting there, alongside his companions. They were cheerful, enjoying themselves. On the inside, Fugaku was cheering too.

The last week had been a rollercoaster of feelings. Sasuke's kidnapping, it had caused the clan to lose the calm it was so reputed for. His youngest had always been popular in the district, being the happy-go-lucky child who always seemed to put a smile on

everyone's faces. The news that after two days he still wasn't back home had shocked every Uchiha. They'd formed posses, they'd combed the district, searched in the woods, Fugaku'd even asked the Hokage to notify him should someone take a glimpse of his missing son. Yet, not even a single trace had become apparent. And it'd made Fugaku desperate. The oh so stoic mask he – the head of Konoha's police force – usually wore had slowly crumbled to pieces. He had hissed, he clutched his fists, the atmosphere surrounding him had been hectic and restless. Naturally, the looks in people's eyes were filled with surprise but also with pity and as the days flew by without progress being made, with understanding. It embarrassed Fugaku. However, there were other matters to occupy his mind with.

He was looking at his cup of freshly served sake and the vapor that was slowly fading into air as he once again asked himself what exactly had caused these happenings. Sasuke knew not to go outside the district's borders after nightfall, especially not without letting either him or Mikoto know beforehand. There was no reason to betray his parent's trust to begin with. Of course he still was a child and therefore easily distracted. Perhaps he'd done so without even noticing. However, Fugaku knew of his son's habit of training once the Academy ended so it was likely he'd been at the usual training spot. What happened from there on out was what needed to be ascertained. Had someone managed to follow him without being noticed? Or had he been hiding there? Did the kidnapper know about his son showing up there sooner or later? Or rather, did he know about Sasuke's schedule? It could've been more than one, too. Fugaku needed to hear the answers from Sasuke himself. He hoped his son would be able to talk, both mentally and physically. Fugaku clutched his fist at the thought of what might've happened to him. They just didn't know what he'd gone through.

"Oi, Fugaku" Looking up he noticed it was Yakumi disturbing his thoughts. The younger one's expression appeared clouded from the alcohol he had consumed (his cheeks and nose reddened; glance unfocused and dull) but as Fugaku was quite used to the sight he forgo to comment on that. With a short nod he signaled his attention.

"Ya know", Yakumi sluggishly began. "I've been wondering about something. About this ... *thing* ... with your *son*, I mean." He articulated whilst throwing his arms as if to undermine his statement.

Unable to see what he was getting at, Fugaku silently rose an eyebrow, while patiently waiting for the other to continue.

"It's just, ya know, curiosity, probably. But why, like, *why* would you be sitting here? Like, shouldn't you be with the other Uchiha and, heck what do I know, discuss ... *ya know?* After all ... *this?*"

Now starting to understand what Yakumi was trying to imply, Fugaku sensed how anger begun to boil in his stomach. Hardening his face's expression he turned his whole body towards the Uchiha, thinking about what to say in order to silence the fool. "You *know* why. Now *stop* talking, Yakumi."

"Yeah, *yeah* ... but, after *this*, isn't there, *ya know*, all the more reason to-"

"No, Yakumi.", he interrupted him while staring into his eyes intensively. "You're drunk. We'll talk tomorrow."

Despite faking ignorance, several other Uchiha paid attention to their conversation and Fugaku, aware of this fact, knew that they as well waited for him to announce the

actions he intended them – and their clan – to take. To announce the attack. Fugaku was no fool and therefore he also knew of the rumors that had spread inside the secure walls of the Uchiha compound. Some ill-mannered whispers had made up a story as to why Sasuke had been kidnapped as well as a rather captivating story about Konoha's elders and how they had always desired a little Uchiha like him to use for their researches about the clan's ocular powers. Of course there was little to no truth in these tellings and Fugaku was very much aware of that. Still, voices had gotten loud among his people about punishing them for what they had done, not just concerning his son but also the things that had happened in the past. For how they had disgraced their clan and kept them locked away like cattle and about how his kind was resented and made responsible for crimes they did not commit. Fugaku had not wished for this to extend to such measures but as their leader he had to take a stand. If he didn't, things would turn out fatal not to say lethal for him, personally, but also those he cared about most. There wasn't much of a choice, really.

His men were no longer willing to accept this kind of discrimination and neither was he, actually. Change needed to happen in order for both parties to continue living side by side. How drastic this change would turn out to be, however, depended on various factors Fugaku was unable to control. He hoped for the best but despite his wishes bloodshed was bound to happen, no matter how much he wanted this to turn out otherwise.

Unfortunately, Yakumi didn't seem to understand that this was neither the place nor the time discussing these matters. "But, don't you think *they* have something to do with it? That about *your son*? I mean-."

He would've stopped the other at this very moment if he hadn't been silenced by the slamming of a door. It was silent all of a sudden. No chatter, no jokes... Something had happened. Tilting his head to look for what had caused the ruckus, Fugaku as well was bound to notice Mikoto standing in the door frame. She was breathing heavily, wearing nothing but her dress despite it being winter. Fugaku didn't even need to hear her speak to know what had happened. The tears streaming down her convulsed face told him all he needed to know. Before she could even say a single word – a single "Sasuke" – he'd already paid for his drink. Trusting her to inform the other Uchiha, he left the pub in order to find their son who once again had vanished from right in front of their eyes.

Where are you going, Sasuke? What do you think you'll archive? Your past is all that ever mattered to you. Why do you intend to escape from it then? Why don't you stay? Why don't you b e l i e v e?

Are you afraid, scaredy-cat? Too scared to face the truth? Too scared to open your eyes? Why are you hiding?

(There is nowhere to hide.)

Coming to a halt he let his gaze wander over the building. The Naka shrine had not changed a bit from what he'd remembered. Just like nothing else had. He wasn't sure

as to why he'd expected this place to be different. Probably because it had changed him and he'd figured it would've accompanied him through this process. Lost a bit of innocence. Lost a bit of what it once was.
Not that it mattered.

Deactivating his sharingan, Sasuke stepped under the archway and was once again impressed by the simplicity. This was the heart of the clan's structure, all that is was. How *fancy*. It should be a monument of great magnitude, a symbol of their glory and pride. *Their* Hokage-tower. Even this they'd been forced to hide, to bury underneath. One more reason to let this god forsaken city burn to ashes. One more reason to assure himself that one day it would.

Attempting to enter the shrine, he was forced to halt his step once more. By now he'd remembered the chakra signature ... and the person it belonged to.

"Father", he called him, turning his head.

(Face your ghosts, Sasuke. So maybe, one day, you can let them go.)