

Crossing Over

Von konpaku

Kapitel 5: First Stages

Chapter 5 – Early Stages

In the Kazekage Tower

Early in the morning Gaara had ordered someone be brought to him that would fit Rukia's description from their talk last night: A man that was dense enough to not feel or possess any spiritual energy at all.

Not knowing what his Kage wanted from him the man waited as Gaara simply sat there staring at him. Squirming under the unwavering gaze he looked around the room to see if he could at least find something to fill the suffocating silence. Time and time again looking at the door as if he would flee any minute.

Without warning said entrance opened, but the Kazekage's siblings weren't there as he expected. There was nothing.

"Kazekage – sama is this some kind of joke?" The man asked nervously.

"What do you mean?" He replied looking from the man to Rukia.

"See. Told you." The Shinigami remarked crossing her arms in front of her, glaring at him victoriously.

"Well...uhm...first you order me here and don't say why and then you open the door, revealing no one..." He tried to explain becoming rather scared now.

"I do not know what you mean. You're dismissed."

"Huh?" The man couldn't comprehend this, looking at his Kazekage in disbelief.

"Leave or I'll make you." Gaara threatened the annoying man, causing him to flee and ran right through Rukia.

For a moment he stopped and shook off a feeling of coldness before running away as fast as he could.

"What a coward." Rukia commented looking at his retreating form and rubbing her arms.

It always felt odd when a mortal passed her spiritual body.

"Presumably, but he proved your point." Gaara acknowledged while standing up and coming closer to her.

"Tell me what kind of spiritual being you are." He demanded, looking down at the slightly shorter woman.

"I'm a...soul... you could say." She tried, struggling not to add the "reaper".

"A soul?" He repeated locking eyes again.

"Yes."

"So you're from the a –"

"Another realm, yes." She interrupted him trying to get him off the track that she was indeed from the afterlife, as humans would call the Soul Society. Sensing that she would leave it at that he let it slide and instead said: "We should depart now."

About the same time in Konoha

She had spent almost two days in Konoha now. When the Hokage had allowed her to stay Rangiku had been brought to the Yamanaka household. One of the villages' Shinobi families. Her host was called Inoichi and owned a flower shop where his daughter Ino and his wife carried out the business, when they weren't on a mission. All of them had rather long blond hair so she suspected that this was the reason Tsunade had chosen this place. She would more or less fit into the family's appearance. Even though her hair held a darker color and she wasn't as skinny as the other girls.

So far they have been pretty nice towards Rangiku, which made her awfully suspicious, but she didn't dare to show it. Instead she settled for being grateful as she was granted their guest room. It was a nice room with a quite comfortable bed, much like the one in her own quarters. She didn't notice how exhausted she had been until she laid down to sleep and drifted off shortly afterwards.

Nevertheless it felt like someone had tried to enter her room during the night, but retreated as soon as she had opened her eyes.

Rangiku had been awoken by an unfamiliar Reiatsu – like presence that lingered near her door. As much as her captain despised her sleeping in his office not even he could argue that her senses were as sharp as when she was awake. But she wasn't as good in distinguishing different presences as she would have liked to be. Therefore she couldn't place whether it was the curious girl or her father. She had tried to figure it out throughout the breakfast, but they just had a too similar presence. It was irritating. To not get distracted by it any further she put it at the back of her mind and focused on her task at hand: Shopping.

Before Tsunade had informed her about Rukia's upcoming arrival Ino had taken her to get her clothes that would make her fit into the look of the people living in this village.

Rangiku was quite satisfied with the choices they had made. She now wore a really comfortable jacket and fitting short trousers. But as she would be staying for some more days she talked the girl into accompanying her.

Hence she now again was in one of the few clothing stores in Konoha, chatting with the girl.

"Say, was Iruka – san your teacher?" Rangiku asked while looking through some tops.

"Yes of course! He was the teacher of a lot of people." Ino retorted as matter of fact.

"And what kind of teacher is he?"

"Aww...he can be pretty annoying at times." Ino stared at the older woman a flat look on her face.

Was she really asking her about Iruka – sensei while shopping?

"I figured."

"Really?" Now her look was a mixture between curiosity and surprise.

"Yeah, he explained some things about the village yesterday and it was...well you know..."

"Yeah I know..."

Just like that they fell into a comfortable silence continuing their search.

Later that evening Matsumoto and the girl sat in her room and still chatted about the village, its inhabitants and general stuff that was going on.

Even though Rangiku had expected the girl to interrogate her it was the other way round. It was always easy for her to manipulate younger girls into talking about certain topics. One of her talents so to speak. So she by now knew a lot more than she had wished for the girl seemed to be a gossip.

She was in the middle of another tirade about some random topic as a knock on the door interrupted her.

"Come in," Ino answered, offended.

Slowly the door opened to reveal a pink haired girl around her age.

"Sakura!" She greeted her friend excitedly.

"Hi Ino," the other girl replied smiling.

"Ah so you're Haruno Sakura! Ino – chan told me about you!" Rangiku greeted as well grinning at her.

"She did?" Sakura replied smiling, though carrying a violent undertone.

"Yeah, she did. She told me about your little forehead problem." Rangiku told her giggling, trying to aggravate the girls into revealing more about their relationship.

"YOU WHAT?" She yelled as expected.

"Of course why should I leave that out, billboard brow?" Ino replied rather coolly.

"You..."

"My, my don't get angry at each other. Your forehead isn't that bad. I don't think the boys would care much about that." Matsumoto tried to change the topic.

"The boys?" Sakura mumbled with a sudden change in demeanor.

"Did I say something wrong?" Rangiku asked looking between the girls who were now sulking.

"N – no not really..." Fidgeting with her hands Sakura looked down.

"Come on girl sit down and tell me." Rangiku demanded, patting the bed next to her. Complying reluctantly she sat down between Ino and the Shinigami.

"Well, uhm..." She started but stopped again, folding her hands.

"This is about Sasuke. He i – was a crush of both of us. And well uhm..."

"He betrayed the village and is trying to destroy it." Ino helped her finish the sentence as Sakura was having difficulty doing so.

They both still couldn't completely accept what had happened, but Ino had a bit more control over her feelings. The girls then told her about the betrayal, the war and everything that has been on their mind regarding this topic.

"So you love him?" Rangiku wanted to know, now standing in front of the girls.

"Well, I shouldn't..." Sakura mumbled.

"Do you or not?" She repeated.

"...I do..." She whispered, tears forming in her eyes.

"What makes you think it is love?"

"What?"

"Why do you think it is love and not just mere affection?"

"Because I love him!" Sakura now yelled, not able to comprehend the difference.

"Baka. You are young. Just because you like someone and have a fluttering feeling in your stomach doesn't mean you love him or her. Love is something that is build over

time and experience with a person. From what you told me your feelings are anything but mutual and nothing more than affection for an idol." The older woman explained bowing down a bit, her hands at her hips.

"That's not true!" The girl protested again.

Straightening herself she used her index fingers to illustrate her point.

"Look there is a difference between loving someone" She lifted her left finger.

"and being IN love with someone." Lifting the second one and moved them apart to either side of her body, opening a gap between them.

"And you, my dear, have an unhealthy crush on someone who does not feel anything for you." She concluded poking Sakura's forehead.

"You don't know what you're talking about!"

"Believe me, I do." Rangiku told her, leaving both girls agape.

"I loved – no love a man that always left me without telling me where he'd go. That toyed with me and my feelings. I tried so many times not to love him, but the feelings remained. Even when he betrayed everyone to join another traitor. Little did we know that he wanted to stop him by himself. To get revenge for something that man had done to me while I was still a child. He carried the burden of the betrayal to make sure I'd be alright. Opposite from you I know he loved me, but our happy ending never came. He just died without leaving even a memento of him." She then confessed, now having tears in her eyes as well.

Wiping away a tear she continued: "Your Sasuke is nothing like that. He sounds evil and even insane. Try to get him out of your head. You have to see him as your enemy. Because if you meet in this war, he will not hesitate to kill you. Even if you would. You have to keep that in mind." She nearly begged the girl kneeling before her and taking her hands.

"But how? I tried, but..."

"I never said it's easy. It was hard for me too. And even if you do not want to or can't erase your feelings than at least be prepared to act against them. To be able to kill him if you need to."

Standing up again Rangiku patted the girls head.

"Besides there are a bunch of cute boys running around this village. Why not pick one of them instead?"

"Did it help you?" Ino wanted to know this time.

"A little. But I had always looked at other men. For example Kakashi – san: I'd totally date him right away." She tried loosening the mood, grinning at the girls.

"Ewww..." Both girls retorted in slight disgust, making Rangiku laugh.

She again managed to turn a conversation a way she wanted. Even though talking about Gin still hurt, she hoped to at least be able to ease some of these two kids' pain.

Back in the Desert

For their journey to Konoha they had given her new clothes. Rukia now wore thinner robes and a cloak that would protect her from the sand. Not that much different to the one her brother had given her for her trip to the realm of Hollows, Hueco Mundo. By now they've been in the heat for the majority of the day. Making it nearly unbearable for her to walk, let alone run anymore. She hardly had a chance to keep up with the others.

'Rukia – chan can you hear me?' A voice suddenly echoed in her mind.

Ripped out of a trance like state she stopped in her tracks, looking around to find the

source of it. Unfortunately she couldn't. Thinking this might just have been a hallucination due to the exposure to the sun she continued walking on, shaking her head.

'Rukia – chan, it's Rangiku. I'm using Tenteikuura to contact you.'

"Rangiku – san?" She mumbled stopping again, relieved that it wasn't her mind playing tricks on her.

'Listen: If you move a bit to the left you will be able to pick up Yumichika. And I guess you don't need to speak out loud.' She told her shortly via the communication Kidou.

'Alright I'll try to lead them to Ayasegawa – san then. Thank you.' Rukia replied in her mind.

'See you in Konoha.' Rangiku ended the mental connection between them, making Rukia realize that everyone was staring at her.

"What happened?" Gaara wanted to know.

Deciding that lying to him wouldn't be the best idea she told him:

"A friend contacted me just now. She said that there is another one of us if we alter this route to the left."

"Then we should do that." He accepted the explanation right away.

"Thank you Kazekage – dono." She bowed shortly before they started off again.

Not that much time had passed until she could sense Ayasegawa Yumichika's spiritual presence.

"That way!" Rukia yelled pointing towards it.

Sensing her as well, Yumichika changed his route to meet them.

"Kuchiki – san!" He screamed as loud as his throat and his dignity allowed him.

Which wasn't loud at all.

"Thank god you found me in this godawful desert!" He exclaimed waving his arms theatrically, before sitting down trying to catch his breath.

"Ayasegawa – san!" Rukia rushed to his side concerned.

Building a mound above them Gaara decided: "We should take a break. He would slow us down otherwise."

Nodding in agreement, his siblings sat down as well, enjoying the shadow the sand had created.

"Here have some water." Rukia offered him her share.

"Thank you Kuchiki – san." He said as he took it and gulped down the refreshing liquid.

"Hey slow down! Don't drink everything in one go!" Kankurou yelled trying to stop him.

Yumichika looked at the boy over the rim of the jug.

"Uarg...what awful face paintings!" He then cried out, covering his eyes.

"The hell?" The boy yelled at him, feeling insulted.

Catching the water container the other had dropped, Rukia noticed him trying to avoid looking at the puppeteer. Not knowing how she could explain this behavior, she simply gave Kankurou an apologetic smile.

"How long will it take to get out of this place? I can't stand this sand anymore. It's everywhere. In my beautiful hair. In my beautiful robes. Every pore of my beautiful face is clogged with this horrible substance...it will take weeks to get it out..." Yumichika started complaining, running his hand through his hair and picking at his robes and cheeks.

"Ayasegawa – san we will soon reach a village, please endure it for a little while longer." Rukia tried to calm the nearly hysterical man, still holding the jug in her

hands.

Staring at him bluntly, the sand siblings didn't understand what this was about. Barely a spot of dust or sand could be seen on him, yet the man seemed to feel filthy. The clothes he wore were like Rukia's when they had first met. Additionally he wore an orange, collar – like thing around his neck that went down to his upper chest. One strand of fabric went down from this to a similar clothing around his right arm. It looked far too warm for this kind of temperature. Following the others' look Rukia inspected her fellow Shinigami as well.

"Ayasegawa – san what happened to your feathers?" She asked him, noticing the missing accessories.

Carefully he took the items from his robes.

"I had to take them off so they wouldn't be damaged in this awful wind..." He sadly explained, placing them back in their secure place after everyone could take a look.

Blinking the Suna Nin decided that it was a safer choice to not ask any further questions regarding this topic.

"Are you able to keep up with our speed?" Gaara asked as he has had enough of the man's rambling.

"Of course." He responded throwing his hair behind his head.

An arrogant gesture meant to not just show an offended pride in his own abilities, but also superior feelings towards the other.

As if he – a member of Squad Eleven, the fiercest and most powerful Squad in Seireitei – wouldn't be able to keep up with some mere kids. How ridiculous.

"Then let's move." Releasing the sand Gaara then stood waiting for the others to follow him.