

Chapter 46: Guess who's back. Back again. This thing's back. Ow my shin.

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“Ugh.”

The first thing he registered as he slowly came back to consciousness was the full body cramp he was feeling. It was as if his entire being was one giant bed sore.

“Naruto!”

The second thing he registered was someone yelling his name far too loudly far too close to his aching head, which happened to be the third thing he comprehended.

“Inside voice. Head. Ears,” his halfhearted groan fortunately was understood as the voices near his bed lowered in volume.

“Welcome back to the world of the living,” Minato chuckled from inside his consciousness.

“Pity. I was getting used to the sanity.” Kurama mocked, only somewhat joking.

“Fuck me, I feel like I got hit by granny,” The time traveller groaned while going through the systematic self check that had been ingrained into him ever time he woke up. *“That’s the last time I use the giant purse for a demo on how fucked reality beyond reality is. How long was I out of it? Years?”*

“Three days,” Minato corrected with some pity, *“But considering the damage that Tsunade and Sakura claimed you had, you probably should have been out of it for a couple of years had it not been for your regeneration. You’re still in terrible shape.”*

“Having the Gobi and Rokubi in you helped. With the chakra of all nine biju in you to some capacity, your system’s reaching a unique equilibrium that wasn’t possible before.” Kurama supplied, **“The more you heal, the more your body can handle more chakra circulating, which will heal you more. It’s spurring on Kokuoh’s and Saiken’s recovery as well, which only redoubles the progress. The fact it took this long for you to wake up at all only underscores just how poor a state you were in.”**

“So long as I stop looking like a Danzo imitator,” reaching for his head, Naruto felt the wraps and gauze that still half mummified his body. “Ugh, my skull.”

“Hold on,” he heard Sakura move to his bed and began to work her jutsu on him, “Anything feel off?”

“I’m hearing voices.”

“**I can always knock him out for some more quiet.**” The fox offered within his soul.

“Don’t you mean rest?” Minato asked.

“**I know what I said.**”

He could literally feel Sakura’s dead stare, “You’re always hearing voices idiot. Work with me.”

Naruto couldn’t help but let out a chuckle of amusement. Even if he was still blinking to clear the fog from his eyes, he could tell his old friend was smiling slightly, “Only half kidding. Peering into other realities in bulk does that sometimes. Constant faint whispers like background noise. That thing.”

“Oh right, *those* whispers.” Sakura was less amused by the reminder, “You’re lucky that Tsunade-sama, Shizune, Hinata, and I were trained to deal with that. The Daimyo had night terrors the first night after your stunt, and the Raikage and Tsuchikage damn near walked out of any further negotiations unless we treated them that afternoon.”

“Well I couldn’t be the only person bedridd-ow!” His half hearted joke was cut short as his doctor poked his very tender chest.

“We’re still in Iron and negotiations haven’t been finalized. Don’t push it when you can still be overheard by people that aren’t willing to give you more benefit of the doubt than you’ve already somehow received.”

“Noted,” it always sucked when he was being treated by a doctor that knew how to hurt him without actually hurting him, “Fine. Fine. I’ll play along. Just give me a minute to actually remember what my body’s supposed to feel like in the first place.”

“Good. Now keep your chakra level for now. I need to see what your base is, not that I have much to compare it to seeing how often your insides have been screwed with lately.”

“And none of it by Hinata, surprisingly.”

“The sad thing is that I’m also surprised by that fact,” with his eyes clearing up, he managed to see the wry smile on his friend’s face, “I should remind her of that.”

Naruto’s amusement died right then and there, “please don’t.”

“She might even take it as a personal challenge.”

“I’ll be good. Please stop. Isn’t agitating the patient something a doctor’s not supposed to do?” He was breaking out in a cold sweat.

“No. But isn’t a patient that agitates a doctor someone that requires unorthodox methods?” Sakura smiled kindly.

“Can I switch doctors?”

“We’re unionized. We gossip and share standards.”

“Fucking unions... wait, we’re a military dictatorship. How did-?”

“Tsunade-sama helped set a couple up with benefits to attract more people to administrative, medical, and village security since they can’t tap the usual rewards from missions outside the village.” Sakura explained.

“... So when it comes to the old hag...”

“As Hokage and the village medical head, she double dips the system, yes. Shizune too as her assistant.”

“I fucking knew it.”

“ANBU managed to worm their way into the security union too, so Sasuke and Kakashi get a piece of the action as well,” you didn’t need to be a shinobi to tell she was enjoying rubbing this in.

Naruto was staring at her, blatantly unamused and betrayed at being cucked from the payout.

“Don’t be such a baby. I saw the paperwork that Scab sent you. You’re literally one of the most wealthy people on the planet.”

“But I wanna milk the system tooooooo.”

“Your very existence puts enough of a strain on it. No need to add insult to injury.”

“But you are insulting me while I’m injured.”

“Semantics.”

The door to the room opened to Tsunade and Shizune walking in. “Not even five minutes after waking up and you’re already moaning about something stupid brat. What is it this time?”

“I told him about the pensions.” Sakura looked at her teacher with an evil smile.

“He didn’t know about that yet?” Shizune asked obliviously, her words stabbing him in the heart further.

Naruto looked at her with wounded puppy eyes.

“Oh yeah. Sucks to be left out, doesn’t it brat,” The Hokage didn’t hesitate to smirk and look down at her patient vindictively.

“You guys are mean.” Truly the revelation hurt him more than his currently aching body.

“And you’re a pain in literally everyone’s ass.” The Hokage rolled her eyes and walked to his bed and looked at Sakura. “Well?”

“Nothing much yet, other than him hearing more voices than he already does.”

“Of course he is. Naruto, is that something you think we should help out with or is that another thing you don’t want us to bother with?”

“A little bit of help wouldn’t hurt. Unlike my damaged heart.” He cried melodramatically.

“That’s what Hinata’s for.” All three women flatly told him as one.

“You’re supposed to heal me! Not damn me!”

“Lungs are clearly functioning. He’s not coughing up blood yet, which is a good sign.” Sakura blatantly ignored his protests.

“Aaaah,” giving up, Naruto dropped his head back onto his bed and grimaced. “If you guys are going to at least keep this up, can you at least start with my head? The whispers from across the intangible folds are manageable, but they are making my headache worse

than it should. It's like listening to distant echoing nails on a chalkboard when you're trying to deal with a hangover."

"I'll take care of it. I've had plenty of practice over the past few days," Shizune stepped up to task.

"Is that with or without spending half of your time as a trainee dealing with Granny's hangovers?"

Fortunately for Shizune, Tsunade's cracking knuckles saved the woman from answering that question.

"Nevermind."

"Naruto, you just woke up. We need to have accurate readings on your vitals. Can you please stop doing things that will end with your blood pressure and heart rate spiking?" Sakura chided.

"Y-yeah. Sorry."

"Try to stay awake." Shizune, fortunately, was the least violent of his caretakers as her glowing hands braced the side of his head. "I know you just woke up and are tired, but we need to see how your body is functioning while conscious."

"Mmmm." He didn't bother with a full word this time, and allowed himself to relax. Despite being normally full of energy, he wouldn't deny that he was still aching all over and on the cusp of passing out again.

"We're going to ask some questions while we give you a lookover. You know how this goes. This isn't the first time we've done this." Tsunade stepped forward with her own hands glowing and started to inspect his chest.

"Naruto, your chakra's changed a bit more due to the biju in you. It's naturally denser than before, so it's harder for us to use some of our jutsu. Kurama helped us out when you were unconscious, but now that you're awake, I'd like you to help out with a few tests if you can." Shizune requested, getting down to business.

"Mmmm." Repeating himself with a halfhearted grunt, Naruto closed his eyes and allowed himself to fall into a meditative trance. His senses branching out not just through his body but through the air around him as well.

Through the hallways.

Through the compound.

Above up into the sky...

“... Damn.”

“What did you do now?” Tsunade grunted, sounding both further and closer than it normally did in his current state of mind.

“Sensory range extended. Chakra’s reaching further than it did before. Wasn’t prepared.” He muttered in a body that felt distinctly separated from his consciousness.

“Is it a problem?” Shizune asked warily.

“Just disorienting.” He calmed their fears. “Like growing an extra few centimeters overnight.”

“Exactly how far can you reach now?” Sakura asked.

He frowned for a moment and “looked”. “... Base of the mountains.”

“Which one?” Shizune asked.

“The ones next to the main ones surrounding the facility. Where most of the ground level fortresses we passed before coming up are.”

“But, that’s... way further than what you said you could look at before.” Sakura faltered in her inspection. The three wolves mountain base was at the peak of the area’s mountain range. The nearest “base” level fortress was over *twenty* kilometers away. “That’s reaching Hinata’s range with her Byakugan.”

“Can’t see everything at once. Muting it down to bare basics and chakra spikes.” Naruto grumbled, feeling his headache intensify from the momentary sensory overload. It was a good thing he was already lying down. The vertigo would have landed him on his ass if he had been standing.

“If it’s not one thing with you it’s another.” Tsunade shook her head.

“Your chakra’s spiking.” Sakura warned.

“Give me a moment,” with an annoyed frown, Naruto inhaled deeply to fill each and every membrane of his lungs with air, and held his breath for ten seconds... and then slowly exhaled from his mouth.

“Ah! W-What the?!” Shizune baked up as a literal wave of chakra saturated gas escaped the patient, immediately flooding the room and escaping through the doorway and vents to the rest of the building and then outside.

“Naruto! Some warning next time!” Sakura had also jumped back from the unexpected display and held back a shiver. The amount of power in the air was simultaneously invigorating and borderline suffocating.

“If I didn’t know any better I would have thought that a Biju passed gas in here. Ugh. Remember to brush before doing this again brat,” Tsunade made a face and waved the air in front of her face to try and get some clean-ish air in her lungs.

“Did she just equate a Biju passing gas to chakra powered halitosis?”

“When it comes to my son, the potential is technically there...”

If Naruto wasn’t literally spinning in his head, he would have actually bothered to be hurt by that.

“His chakra flow is stabilizing.” Shizune blinked in surprise.

“Too much chakra was in my body. Seventh Sense needs to be readjusted. Again.” The blonde grunted annoyed.

“It’s amazing and terrifying when you of all people say that you’re running too hot.” Tsunade shook her head in defeat before returning to his side. “By all rights you should have a chakra cloak right now.”

“Probably. Spreading the chakra out into the air.” His lips twitched up in amusement, “you could say that technically all the air around the base counts as my cloak.”

“How comforting. They always say that the calmest place in the middle of the biggest shitstorms is in the center.” The Hokage deadpanned.

“You make it sound like I wasn’t one to start with.” Naruto matched her snark with his own.

“You said it. Not me.” Sakura shook her head.

“And on the topic of shit storms, care to tell me what exactly happened while I was out?”

The room went quiet.

“C-come on Naruto. I know everyone rips on your terrible luck, but after those bombs you dropped on the Kage, do you think that anyone is willing to do something that stupid here?” Sakura tried to lie her way out of it, but she wasn’t doing a good job of it.

“Don’t play stupid. There’s an entire castle wall that collapsed. I’d be able to feel the air flow from here even without the Seventh Sense.” Naruto opened his eyes, his usual immature mirth completely gone.

It was only then that Naruto noticed that his friend had bags under her eyes, indicating that she had not been getting enough sleep lately.

He frowned, and then extended his senses to check up on his hunch.

And was left disappointed, for all the wrong reasons.

“... Oi.”

“Naruto, you’re in no position to bother with-” Tsunade tried to order him to take it easy and drop the matter, but the cold glance that had none of his prior childish mirth cut her off.

“Did you really think I wouldn’t notice Sasuke’s chakra after waking up?” His tone was cold and accusing.

“... I told them they should have started with the Ramen.” Shizune muttered under her breath.

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