

Crossing Over

Von konpaku

Kapitel 9: Reunited

The next morning

"When the village was rebuilt after its destruction we didn't manage to get everything done as fast as we liked. So some places are still untouched and the grass even regrew there. One of these places is currently used by the Ninja Squads of our generation to train together. And that's where we're headed." The pink haired girl explained with a smile, leading the way.

Last night the three Shinigami had shared a feast with three of the most known families of Konoha and throughout it exclaimed their interest in the Ninjas techniques and ways of fighting. So this morning Yamanaka Inoichi suggested that they should watch the youngsters train and even participate if they liked. The latter was directed at the anxious Third Seat whose eyes started to gleam by the prospect of training. Curious they had accepted and had later followed Ino to her friend's house.

When Sakura had opened the door to greet them her eyes soon landed on the tall red haired lieutenant that smiled sincerely at her. Blushing slightly she was only able to get out a meek "Hello" when Ino had introduced her. When she realized her friend and Matsumoto where giggling at her behavior she shook her head. She was a fine Shinobi of the Hidden Leaf and not some little school girl. Though that fiery guy looked pretty handsome, the bald one on the other hand, not so much. As much as she tried to not look disgusted by his lack of hair, she still let a little of it slip onto her face, causing the women to laugh even more. The men however seemed to be oblivious to her antics.

Renji pretty much realized what the girls found so funny about this situation, but he was reminded far too much of Kusajishi Yachiru, the pink haired devil from Squad 11, to take her serious. And he was quite certain Ikkaku was as well, as he had cringed when the girl had stepped out her door.

After Ino had managed to introduce Renji and Ikkaku as well they started off to the training field.

As the village wasn't nearly as big as the Sereitei it did not take them long to get there. On their arrival they saw several people busying themselves on the ground.

The boys from last night were already there. One slouching in the grass, the other stuffing chips into himself. For a brief moment Shikamaru display of laziness reminded them of the Eighth Squad Captain Kyouraku Shunsui, who liked to slouch on rooftops and basically everywhere else, too. With a grin they continued their observations.

Two girls with long dark hair were practicing hand-to-hand combat, while another one with buns on either side of her head threw things at a guy with bushy hair and an upturned collar of his jacket that hid himself behind a black wall.

There also was a gigantic dog and a rather feral looking boy leaning against its side. Both of them simultaneously yawned deeply, showing off their clearly visible canine teeth.

The last of them was a green clad boy with a bowl-cut and pretty thick eyebrows that had just ran up to them.

"Sakura-san. Ino-san. Good morning!" He cheerfully greeted them.

"Good morning Lee-san." Sakura returned, smiling slightly.

"And you must be Tsunade-sama's guests!" Lee then added towards the Shinigami.

His outburst now caused everyone to stop in their tracks and carefully observe the new arrivals.

"Yep, that's us and you are?" Matsumoto joined the conversation with a smile on her face.

"I am Rock Lee, Konoha's Beautiful Green Wild Beast!" He exclaimed, pointing his thumb at his chest.

For a moment the Shinigami just stared at him before Madarame let out the snort he was trying to withhold and started into full out laughter. Renji and Rangiku were better at keeping calm, but couldn't help to at least grin at his chosen nickname.

Lee not understanding what was going on, asked them puzzled: "What's so funny?"

Before Ikkaku could say anything Matsumoto elbowed him and answered: "Nothing. He is just irritating like that."

Still laughing Ikkaku roared with tears in his eyes: "Calls himself a beast and looks like a wimp!"

"Ikkaku-san!" Renji tried to stop him, while Rangiku just put her hand at her forehead at this stupidity.

"Lee would kick your ass any time." A deep voice from behind the boy chimed in.

Ikkaku stopped laughing and looked at the new person in confusion. It was one of the girls they had watched earlier, but the voice was way too low for a female.

"Neji-kun?" Lee wondered staring in disbelief at his teammate.

Neji never said things like that about him. With watery eyes he was about to say something when the girl with the buns added: "That's right! Lee-kun is the best Taijutsu-user of our generation!"

Tears of joy dripped down Lee's cheeks, but he kept himself in check to not lose his cool completely. By now the group of Shinigami was surrounded by the Shinobi. Matsumoto just hoped that Madarame would not accidentally cause a fight. But he seemed to be more concerned with the gender of the boy's first defender.

"You're a boy! And you don't have pupils!" He finally concluded after a moment of silence.

"You are bald." The other coldly replied.

"Oi." He threatened holding up his fist.

"What? I thought we were stating obvious facts." Neji just replied with a grin; shrugging.

"Neji-kun, since when are you so witty?" Ten-Ten interjected, but was ignored when Matsumoto pulled the Third Seat's ear to her, before he could say or do anything else.

"Remember, I will tell every foolish thing you do to Yachuri-chan." She whispered, so only he could hear it.

He gulped and looked up at her in fear. Renji could guess what she said and gave his

colleague a sympathetic look. When Rangiku let go of his ear Ikkaku straightened himself again and cleared his throat as if nothing had happened.

"Well, what are you good at?" The feral boy now used the silence.

Madarame eyed him and returned his grin with an equally ferocious one.

"I'm more than good with the sword and pretty much every other weapon as well." Ikkaku prided himself, still grinning.

"So you are like a Samurai?" Chouji innocently asked putting a chip into his mouth.

"Samurai?" Renji asked.

"You have those too?" Matsumoto wondered.

"Yeah, heavily armored and masters of the sword." Shikamaru explained.

"Pah, armor is for weaklings! Real man steel their body to make it impenetrable." Madarame huffed bumping his fist against his chest.

"Ikkaku-saaan..." Renji only said, rolling his eyes at his Sempai.

"If you're as good as you claim, how about a little spar?" The girl with the buns offered.

"A spar with a little girl? You don't want me to hurt you missy." He told her in a superior tone.

"We'll see who's going to get hurt. Choose a weapon." She said and motioned for her friends to move aside a bit as she needed space to unroll a large scroll to show him its content.

On the scroll were several rings alongside each other, each with the Kanji for a weapon in it.

Thinking this was just a list of choices Ikkaku started grinning manically after a moment and said: "Sansetsukon"

"Interesting choice." Tenten complimented putting the scroll onto the ground.

After that she bit her finger and put her hands on the scroll, where the Kanji for the chosen weapon was positioned. With a poof and a cloud of smoke it appeared right before them.

"Nice." Renji commented, then added curiously: "How do you do that?"

"Well, it's a Summoning technique. I can summon every object that I've put a seal onto. The seal is like a contract between the object and me." The girl explained.

"But you can't only summon tools, there are also people that have contracts with animals they can summon." Neji added.

"What for?" Ikkaku asked this time.

"Well, Kakashi-sensei for example has a contract with a pack of Ninja dogs, that help him track down people and stuff. Tsunade-sama has a contract with a slug that has healing abilities." Ino counted on her fingers.

"Naruto can summon toads." Her pink haired friend added.

"And Gai-sensei can summon a Ninja turtle!" Lee exclaimed proudly.

"Ninja turtle? Like those mutant things in Ichigo's world that that boy with the creepy sister showed me?" Ikkaku wondered.

When everyone looked at him in confusion he silently added: "Never mind..."

"So you just make a contract and then summon whatever you have the contract with to help you?" Renji concluded, trying to cover his friend's mishap of referring to Ichigo's place.

"Basically, yes." Tenten agreed.

"Can we do something like that too?" Renji asked Rangiku.

"I'm not sure, but I guess not in that way at least..." She answered.

She'd never really heard of anything similar that did not involve a special Zanpakutou

ability.

"What a shame, could have been handy..." The other lieutenant said sadly.

Tenten herself decided to take a Nunchaku, with which she would have a shorter reach, but, thanks to their height difference, still an advantage in movement. Renji still didn't know if it would be a good idea to let them fight, as he knew how Madarame fought. When he looked at Matsumoto he also knew that she thought the same thing. Nevertheless the girl had decided to challenge him and turning back would be an act of cowardice in the eyes of the Third Seat. Reluctantly Abarai and Rangiku made space for them, just as the Shinobi had done.

Swirling the supposed spear Ikkaku tried to get a feeling for the weapon. It felt far too different to be Houzukumaru, but he would make do with it. Deep within him he could feel the Sword Spirit steer at the opportunity to fight. Catching the spear with both hands he grinned and mumbled: "Now you wanna fight, you lazy bum?"

They had yet to learn how to unseal their Zanpakutous, but he could still feel the yearning of fighting alongside each other in a battle again.

"You ready?" Buns – as he had dubbed her – asked, jolting him out of his thoughts.

"Sure. But there is a tradition where I come from where you tell your opponent your name before a fight, so that in the case you lose you know who brought death to you. I'm Madarame Ikkaku." He introduced himself and the customs of the Eleventh Squad. Tenten gulped. She did not plan to make this a death-match.

"The name is Tenten and I was under the impression this is a training fight." She replied with a slightly shaky voice.

"Don't worry missy, just some courtesy before we get started." He laughingly dismissed her fear and got into a fighting stance.

"Okay. Then let's roll." She acknowledged and started the attack.

Launching herself forward she swirled the Nunchaku over her head to get it in the perfect position for a proper hit against his hip, while she slouched down to make it harder for him to aim at her. But Madarame just stood there waiting for her to come closer and when she was nearly before him he used the hilt of his spear to trip her and step aside. It was a cheap trick, but he wasn't really in the mood to harm a young girl. In the mood to fight, yes; in the mood to fight with a girl, not so much. Sure she was a fighter, but he knew his strength and doubted she would be able to cope with that. For two more times Tenten tried this move under the watchful eyes of her companions. Every time she tripped she rolled over and started anew. She knew this strategy wouldn't bring her far, but this way she could understand his defense a little better. When she next approached him, Tenten did not slouch at all and aimed higher. When he saw his chance Ikkaku swirled the spear to throw her off-balance again by hitting her in the side with the hilt. But when he just had launched his attack she ducked sideways and skillfully wrapped her weapon around the staff to keep it from splitting apart. The moment of surprise on her side, she dragged his weapon out of his grip, while she continued her turn. When she ended her circle she used her remaining momentum and all the strength she could muster in her position to hit him right across the face with the hilt of his very own weapon. For a moment rocking back and forth Madarame couldn't quite grasp what had just hit him and soon fully lost his balance and landed on his back. Accompanied by roar of laughter around him. When he had gathered himself a little, he was met with his colleagues words.

"Hahaha. The o-so-mighty Madarame Ikkaku defeated by a little girl!" Matsumoto laughed.

"Wait til Yachiru-chan finds out about this!"

"NO! She must NEVER know about this! This is..." he yelled, trying to stand up but he was still too shaky to do so.

"Rukia." Renji mumbled out of nowhere and grinned widely before he ran off without another word leaving everyone staring at his back in confusion.

In another part of the village

"RUKIA!" A yell met them when the group of the Kazekage had just reached the middle of the village.

They stopped, waiting for the man to approach them.

Picking the small Shinigami up in a swift move Renji hugged her tightly.

"LET GO STUPID!" Rukia yelled back, trying to get rid of her friend.

She had missed him too but that didn't give him the right to treat her like this. Regardless of whether she enjoyed it, he still did it in public and more than that: In front of her brother. Embarrassing wasn't even a strong enough word for this.

"Abarai." Was the only word necessary to make Renji drop Rukia in an instant.

"YOU IDIOT!" She insulted him again; kicking his shin.

"Why you...", Abarai cursed lowering himself to be on eye-level with her.

"You don't listen to what I say but obey right away when Nii-sama addresses you!" She complained poking him on the forehead with each word.

"Enough."

Both of them gulped and bowed immediately.

"My apologies Nii-sama."

"Sorry Taicho."

A look of confusion on the faces of the sand siblings could only stare as the next one approached.

"Rukia-chan!" Rangiku yelled hugging the little Shinigami close to her chest.

"Ra-Rangiku-san!" Renji stammered, who had just been pushed aside now sitting on the ground.

"Can't...breathe..." Was all that could be heard from Rukia.

Before fully suffocating her, Rangiku let go just as suddenly, moving on to the other Kuchiki.

"Bya-kun." She simply stated hugging him around the neck.

Knowing that she wouldn't expect him to return the display of affection he simply stood there closing his eyes just being glad that she was save and by his side again.

Renji and Rukia however exchanged a questioning look at this.

"Hey, shouldn't Yumi be with you?" The bald man that just approached them asked breaking the silence that had befallen the group.

Letting go of Byakuya Rangiku stood next to him looking curiously at the others.

"He dropped off as soon as he had seen the first sign of a bathhouse. He said he wanted to get rid of all the filth..." The taller of the two boys explained waving his arms in the air.

"Sounds like him..." Ikkaku acknowledged nodding.

"Why's the kid wearing a giant Sake jar?" He added when he had taken a closer look at the new arrivals, pointing his index at Gaara.

"It's a gourd." Kankurou replied already annoyed by the repeated question rubbing his temples.

"Isn't that some place with judges?" Madarame asked confused.

"No that's a court. A gourd is something like a vase." Renji explained confidently.

"It's neither a Sake jar nor a vase. It's a gourd damn it!" Rukia yelled this time mimicking Kankurou's earlier outburst at her and hitting Renji again for his stupidity, making him cringe in pain.

"So there isn't any Sake in it?" Rangiku asked slightly pouting.

"No there isn't." Gaara himself answered.

"What a pity...But you're far too cute for drinking any-...huh?" Rangiku stated and tried to ruffle his hair, but her hand only met a sheet of sand holding her at bay.

"Sand?" She asked slowly taking her hand away again.

"Yes, it's the Kazekage's natural defense." Temari told her in a reprimanding tone.

"That's interesting..." Rangiku concluded smiling at them, before it hit her.

"You are the Kazekage? But you're so young! I mean: My apologies Kazekage-dono." She tried to excuse her behavior with a short bow.

With the information laid out in front of them Ikkaku and Renji exchanged a look. If a kid this young could be a village-leader then he would have to be prodigy like Hitsugaya-taicho.

"It's alright; I am after all one of the youngest Kages ever." Gaara forgave her courtly.

"Thank you." Rangiku bowed again.

After a pause she then moved to Rukia grabbing her arm then linking her other one with Byakuya's.

"Let's get you two some clothes before you'll meet Tsunade-chan!" Matsumoto exclaimed dragging them off, leaving everyone staring at them.

"That's Rangiku-san for you...", Renji simply stated while standing up, still rubbing his aching head.

"Yup." Ikkaku agreed nodding again.

"Whatever. I'm Abarai Renji." He then introduced himself; bowing and then holding out his hand.

"Renji?" Gaara asked curiously, remembering the conversation he had with Rukia.

"Yeah."

"I see." He then just said and started walking off.

"Gaara?" Temari asked confused.

"We should report in to Tsunade-san." He excused his actions.

Following him without complaint the Shinobi left the Shinigami standing on their own.

"Well, I better check up on Yumi." Ikkaku concluded.

"And I'll make sure Rangiku-san won't annoy Kuchiki-taicho too much..." Decided Renji and the two of them departed as well.

Later that evening in the bathhouse

The head of the village had welcomed the new arrivals and invited them to the bathhouse to relax from the journey. Alongside the Shinigami several of the Shinobi were present as well.

Renji walked in only wearing a towel around his hips. With a small smile he noticed that everyone still gave each other a lot of space. As if neither of them trusted the other. But who would actually trust someone so different and foreign this early on. On the left side of the pool a couple of young Ninja splashed in the water, while at the back his Taicho and the Kazekage sat on a bench to overlook everything. He figured it would be awful for the sand-kid to be covered in water and briefly wondered how he bathed in the first place without cracking his own defense. Grinning a bit more he

stepped into the water and let himself slowly sink deeper.

"Renji get out!" Yumichika ordered him, just as the water had enclosed his abdomen.

"What? Why? I just got in!" The red head complained, raising a bit to look at his friend. The other one was sitting on a bench behind him and had been carefully combing his hair. But now he looked like he had seen a ghost.

"Just do it stupid!" Ikkaku echoed annoyed.

He tangled his feet into the water close to the Fukutaicho.

Grumbling Renji got out of the water again. This was not how he had planned to spend his evening of relaxation.

"So what?" He asked facing Yumichika who stood up and turned him around in one swift movement.

"The hell?"

"I don't think that sign is supposed to be on your back...", he concluded after examining the taller man's back and poking a peculiar looking pattern.

"What? What sign? I can't see anythin'!" Renji exclaimed trying to look at his own back.

"Baka Renji what are you yelling at?" Came a little slurred voice from the other side of the wooden wall from the women's hot spring.

"Yumichika said there's somethin' on ma back!"

"And you idiot are probably trying to look at it like a puppy trying to bite its own tail...:", remarked a colder voice this time.

"Shut up!" Renji yelled flustered, turning bright red, causing everyone to laugh even harder.

Everyone except his captain and the sand-kid of course, of course.

"I'll get ya for that midget..." He mumbled under his breath.

"Tsunade—dono would you agree on having a look at this obnoxious man as this sign clearly does not fit into his extraordinary appearance?" The older Kuchiki silenced the laughter.

"Tai—", Renji started but was cut silent by his superior's glare.

"Yeah. Think I could do that. Send the brat over. Don't want to get out of the spring yet." The Hokage replied, her speech slightly slurred as well.

"Very well. Make yourself presentable Renji." Byakuya ordered his lieutenant.

Blushing and cursing the man went inside again to put on some dry clothes to cover his lower body. So much for a relaxing bath in a hot spring.

When he slowly opened the entry door to the women's bath he had his eyes shut closely.

"You don't have to go blindly Renji, you know?"

"I know Rangiku—san, but I prefer Kuchiki—taicho not to kill me for acting inappropriately." He answered blushing again, which made everyone to at least grin at him, again.

Carefully he tried to evade the different Reaitsus he felt before him on his way to the most strongest one that he knew was the Hokage. Feeling everyone's eyes on him he couldn't help but to blush even more. He was used to people staring at the marks on his body. It wasn't that he wasn't proud of them, but he still felt utterly uncomfortable if this happened when he couldn't do anything about it. In this situation it was required that he didn't cover up, so the village-leader could examine his back. Taking a deep breath he cast out his thoughts of insecurity and did what was expected of him. Reaching Tsunade he stood and turned to face the wooden wall that separated the springs.

"Now than let's have a look at...this..." She started and stopped abruptly as her eyes fell on the sign Yumichika had discovered.

From the pattern of the marks, that reminded her of strange tiger stripes it was clear that this sign wasn't part of the man's decorations. Right at the end of a stripe a different pattern started. It was intertwined and remotely resembled a circle filled with several lines. Reaching out with her Chakra she went to touch it, only for Renji to jolt away.

"Did that hurt?" She questioned him.

"No, it just felt weird. Sorry." He replied, lowering his head a little in embarrassment and let himself relax again to let her proceed.

"It's alright." She acknowledged and tried again.

This time Abarai didn't move and she could feel the Chakra embedded in the sign. It was quite familiar, yet she couldn't pinpoint from where she knew it. In the back of her mind something told her, that she didn't want to, but she put that thought aside. What was in front of her was clear nonetheless.

"I think we now can reconstruct how you came here." She declared.

"Really?" Renji and several others replied.

Without second thought the Shinigami had turned around and was now trying his best to keep looking at the Hokage's face. The blush returning to his face.

"Yes, but I think it will be best if we have you properly examined in the morning. Now go back before you look somewhere where you are not supposed to look." Tsunade warned him with a look of anger and menace on her face.

"Hai." The lieutenant gulped and all but vanished from her side.

Only to reappear close to the door and hurriedly make his way inside. A little confused the Hokage looked at Rangiku for an explanation. Sighing the Shinigami explained to her what a Flash-Step was and how they used it to cover larger distances.

Back in Soul Society

"Freeze" She yelled at the retreating figure.

After days of searching Rukongai they had finally found the culprit that had caused several high-ranking officers to just vanish. She had organized a small group of trackers that would help her with her task. It wasn't easy to follow the trace, as it had just been planted on one of the disappeared Shinigami, who was highly trained in using Shunpo to move faster. Therefore the trace was thicker whenever the carrier made a step and thin whenever he was within the movement. But now they had finally reached their destination. As soon as the man had spotted the Shinigami, however, he changed his course. Probably anticipating some repercussions after what he had done. He didn't leave her a choice but to attack him. Or rather restrain him with a Kidou. She motioned for the others to cut off his way. But he dodged every last one of them. Cursing herself for picking trackers that were incapable of actually apprehending someone, she shouted: "Bakudou Yon Hainawa" as a lightning chain had formed from her hands and sent it off to capture the man. When he dodged her attack as well she diverted the course of the Kidou to catch him off guard. And it worked. Her natural abilities with binding-spells could be thanked for that.

Just as with the way that boy had helped him with the "Hollow" this attack was different to any Jutsu he had ever known. He couldn't break free from it, regardless of how much he struggled against it. He had been captured and now he would have to pay for the little Jutsu he had put on the red-head. Sighing he gave in and looked at

his pursuer.

"Oh, it is YOU! Haha, how long has it been?!" He then cheerfully greeted, when he realized who had captured him.

"A while." She responded with a slight smile.

"You have to come with us. You need to answer some questions."

"I thought as much...But if it is you who is taking me in then I am more than willing to oblige." He agreed, a grin still in place.

If she was part of the interrogation then he could at least hope to get away with it a little more lightly. She would understand why he had to do it. At least he hoped so.