

Dragon's chakra strings tightened subtly, rendering both Kuroda and Tomomi immobile. Fear flashed in their eyes as they realized they couldn't move.

"I'll begin with you," Dragon said as his gaze settled on Tomomi. His voice was devoid of emotion. Tomomi and her husband felt dread growing from the pit of their stomachs.

'Is it ready?' Dragon mentally asked his four shadow clones stationed throughout the compound.

'Yeah.'

'I used it on them as much as I could. Upped my chakra reserves by absorbing them from the guards first but now I'm low again. Leveling up those Yamanaka techniques took a lot out of me...'

'Looks like we were all able to level up those jutsus.'

'That should give us a good start. I'm going to dispel myself now.'

One by one the four solid clones dispelled themselves and their combined experience spread across the remaining Daichis.

[Ninjutsu: Mind Reading Jutsu has leveled up.] x7

[Ninjutsu: Mind Destruction Jutsu has leveled up.] x3

[Skill Mind Drain has leveled up.] x4

[Skill Chakra Absorption has leveled up.] x5

[Ninjutsu: Body Freeze Jutsu has leveled up.] x2

'I see the Minister is being tough.' Came the message from the original Daichi.

'Yes, but I somewhat anticipated it. He wouldn't have become the Minister of such a large nation if he gave in so easily to every threat. Everything is proceeding within my expectations.' Dragon nodded to himself and replied.

'Go ahead. We need everything you can get from their heads.'

'I'm on it boss.' Dragon closed the communication array and refocused on his task.

Dragon took a step forward and Tomomi's body shook with terror. "Please, no! I don't know anything more!" she pleaded, her voice trembling.

'That's a lie. Right now she's feeling true terror for her life but she's still willing to keep their secrets. Is she that afraid of Orochimaru or is there something more important than her life? Or is she lying in the hopes that I'm bluffing about harming them?'

Kuroda gritted his teeth and struggled against the invisible bonds. "You bastard. Leave her out of this! She's innocent!"

Dragon tilted his head slightly and glanced at the man. "Innocent? She knows more than she's admitting." He took another slow step toward Tomomi. "Sometimes, those who appear the weakest hold the most valuable secrets."

Tomomi's breathing quickened. *'He can't possibly harm me... can he?'* "I swear, I've told you everything I know!" she insisted.

Dragon's eyes bore into hers. "Lies won't help you now." He lifted his hand, and a faint glow emanated from his fingertips. "There's a technique that allows me to delve into your memories. It's... invasive."

Kuroda's face paled. "No! You can't!"

Ignoring him, Dragon continued, "It can be quite painful if you resist. But if you relax, it will be over quickly."

Tears welled in Tomomi's eyes. "Why are you doing this?"

"Because time is of the essence," Dragon replied coldly. "And I've run out of patience."

She looked desperately at her husband. "Kuroda, please!"

Kuroda's shoulders slumped. "Tomomi... I'm sorry."

Dragon placed his fingertips lightly on her temples. "This will only take a moment."

As he began to channel his chakra, Tomomi felt a strange sensation, like icy tendrils creeping into her mind. Panic surged through her. *'No. If he really hurts me... If he really kills us then all of this will be for nothing. I won't be... No. I have to stop this!'*

"Wait!" she cried out. "I'll tell you the truth. I'll tell you everything I know about Orochimaru.!"

As soon as those words left her lips, Dragon sensed a severe spike in Kuroda's vitals. "Don't! Don't you dare say another word." This time he was warning her. There was even a hint of threat in his tone.

Dragon ignored the man and looked at his wife. He could tell that she was finally willing to be completely honest. But he didn't stop his movements. "You had your chance. I gave you plenty of opportunities. Now we do it my way." He shook his head and spoke with finality.

He activated the Mind Reading Jutsu. The world around him blurred as he delved into Tomomi's consciousness. Suddenly, he found himself standing in a vast, ethereal landscape. The representation of her mind.

'So this is her mental space. She doesn't have her own avatar. Not surprising. She hasn't received any training whatsoever.' he mused, observing the swirling mists and fragmented images floating around. Each memory shimmered like a delicate bubble, waiting to be touched.

Dragon looked at himself and saw that he was in his true form. He was in the body of Daichi Hekima floating in a vast space. *'I expected this from the memories of my clones but still... Looks like I'll have to make sure these guys don't talk after I'm done.'*

Daichi looked around and soon reached out to the nearest memory. As he made contact, the scene enveloped him.

He stood in a grand hallway of the mansion, observing Kuroda as he spoke to his head guard. His wife was a few feet behind him.

"Recall all patrols to the inner grounds," Kuroda ordered sternly. "I want the defenses around this area increased immediately."

"Yes, Minister," the guard replied with a bow before hurrying off.

The Leaf Genin looked around the room and noticed a calendar. The date on it was marked 8 days ago.

'This was a week ago.' Daichi noted. *'He knew something was coming even back then.'*

The memory faded and Daichi moved to another that glowed slightly brighter. Touching it, he was pulled into a private chamber where Tomomi and Kuroda sat close together.

"Is Orochimaru moving forward with the plan?" Tomomi asked, her eyes alight with anticipation.

Kuroda nodded. "Yes. Everything is set. He assures me that the results will exceed our expectations."

She smiled slyly. "Soon, we'll have everything we've ever desired."

'Ambition runs deep with these two.' Daichi thought with a hint of disgust creeping in. *'This memory is only a few days old.'*

Seeking more, Daichi delved deeper into her memories, reaching back a few months. *‘This is a memory from three months ago. January, if I’m not mistaken.’*

Daichi found himself in a lavish sitting room. He looked at the two other occupants and watched the memory play out.

Tomomi noticed her husband pacing around the room with a tense and frustrated expression.

"What's bothering you? It's not about that land is it?" she asked softly.

Kuroda sighed heavily. "Yes. I lost the bidding war. Me! To top it off, I lost it to that insufferable Ishida. At the last moment the rights to the northern lands slipped through my fingers."

She touched his arm reassuringly. "There will be other opportunities, my love."

He shook his head. "You don't understand. That land was crucial for expanding my influence."

She frowned. "Is there nothing we can do?"

Kuroda became silent and hesitated to give a reply. Tomomi, noticing the discomfort on her husband's face, frowned. "What's wrong? You know you can tell me anything."

The minister sighed and after a few more seconds of silence he spoke softly. "Someone came to see me a few days ago. That night after the auction. Someone dangerous. He made me a new offer."

Tomomi's eyes slightly widened. Very rarely does her husband refer to someone as dangerous. "Who?"

"Orochimaru of the Sannin. He came to see me that night."

Her eyes widened in shock. "Orochimaru? You mean the rogue ninja from the Hidden Leaf village?"

"Yes." The minister nodded as he sat down on the bed.

"What did he want? Did he threaten you?"

"No. He came alone. We just talked. He offered me a partnership," Kuroda admitted. "He needs assistance acquiring some advanced medical technology from the Land of Snow and in setting up a base here. In exchange..."

"In exchange, what?" She was desperate to know what a dangerous criminal like Orochimaru could offer the Finance minister of a great nation.

"In exchange... he promises immortality."

Tomomi gasped. "Immortality? Is that even possible?"

Kuroda sighed and slowly nodded his head. "For someone like him, it's a possibility. And not just that. He said he would make me as strong as a kage level ninja. I don't know how but he was very confident in himself."

Tomomi then calmed down from her shock and gazed at her husband. "All these offers... But they're still not a guarantee. We don't know if any of it is possible or not. You wouldn't have been so conflicted if it was only that. What else did he promise you?"

Kuroda's gaze became distant. "He also said he could help me become the Daimyo of the Land of Earth."

She grasped his hands tightly. "What?"

"Yes." The minister nodded. He then looked at her with a dead serious gaze. "What we're talking about is treason. If anyone finds out, we'll be in serious trouble."

Tomomi held her husband's hand as if to reassure him. "I won't say a word of this to anyone. You have my word, my love."

Kuroda looked at her and then nodded. At that moment his wife was thinking about the offer she just heard.

"Still, if you think about it, it's incredible! Just imagine. You, becoming the Daimyo. Us ruling this entire nation forever! It's a wonderful dream."

Kuroda looked uncertain. "But aligning with someone like him... it's dangerous. He can't be trusted. He betrayed his own village and his people."

She dismissed his concerns with a wave. "Ninjas, no matter how strong, wouldn't dare attack the Daimyo or members of his court, no matter what land. It's the law of the world. The fact that he came to make a deal instead of outright threatening you is proof of that. We're untouchable. This could be our chance!"

He looked into her eyes, seeing the excitement. "You really believe we should accept?"

"Yes. Absolutely," she affirmed. "We've grown complacent with mere wealth. We can make money and become rich at any time. But the power to rule over a great nation? The chance to live forever? How often do opportunities like that come? This is our moment."

"And if he doesn't keep his end of the deal after he gets what he wants?" Kuroda asked his wife with a raised eyebrow.

"If that happens, I'm sure you can think of several ways to make him regret that choice." Tomomi said with a smile that hid a cruel tone.

'So she was the one who pushed him toward this alliance.' Daichi realized and anger was simmering beneath the surface of his skin.

He moved to another memory, this one from two months ago. The couple sat together once more and the atmosphere was tense.

"Orochimaru came to see me. I wanted to know more about his plans on how he was going to make me the Daimyo." Kuroda told his wife.

"And? Did he tell you?"

The minister nodded his head. "Yes. He told me some of his plans. But for all of it to work Tsunade Senju is needed." Kuroda revealed quietly.

"Tsunade Senju? I heard she's a great medic. The best in the world. Wait! Isn't she also his teammate?"

"Former teammate. But he assures me he holds no such sentiments. He plans to abduct her when he's ready." Kuroda said as he lit a cigar.

Tomomi raised an eyebrow. "But why her? Is it for her medical expertise? Does he expect her to help him?"

"Not exactly. He needs her for his experiment. Well, to be more precise she is his experiment." he replied. "Her rare lineage is vital. It's the key for him to achieve his goals and for us to realize our dreams.."

Tomomi nodded and sighed as she thought about the situation. "Hmm... I take it she's important to the Leaf Village?"

The Minister nodded his head. "Very. If she gets abducted they'll be in a panic and will search for her all over. Tensions will rise between our nations. And if anyone finds out we had a part in all this, we'll be in serious danger."

Tomomi was silent for several moments. She looked out the window for a short while to gather her thoughts before she turned back to her husband. "But they won't find out will they? You're taking extreme precautions aren't you?"

Kuroda nodded. "Yes. Everything that's being imported into the country is carefully monitored and nobody knows where it's going except Wapoji and Orochimaru. And no one knows of my deal with that Snake except for you."

Tomomi smiled hearing that. "Then I'm not worried." She shrugged nonchalantly. "What do I care about a ninja from another nation? As long as he fulfills his promises to us. Besides, she's a ninja of an enemy nation. Even if we only take that into account we're still doing right by our country."

Kuroda looked troubled. "This could spark conflict with the Hidden Leaf Village."

"And we have the Hidden Stone fighting for us." She laughed lightly. "Let those idiots squabble with each other. Soon, we'll be beyond the reach of such petty concerns."

'Her indifference to the suffering of others is astounding. She is just as ruthless as her husband. A perfect twisted match.' Daichi thought as his disdain grew, looking at the image of the woman.

He sifted through more memories but found that this was the extent of her knowledge. *'A woman who's driven by greed and ambition and blind to the moral decay consuming her. I have something special in mind for you, Tomomi Michinori.'*

With a bit of frustration which was kept hidden, Daichi exited her mind. The ethereal landscape faded and he was back in the opulent chamber, his fingertips still resting on Tomomi's temples.

He pulled his hands away and let out a deep breath of air. Tomomi's eyes were glazed. It was a lingering effect of the jutsu. Kuroda was watching anxiously, his face was a mix of fear and anger.

"What did you do to her?" he demanded.

Dragon ignored him and closed his eyes as he took a long deep breath of air. *'These two are willing to sacrifice anything and anyone for their own gain. They aligned themselves with Orochimaru not out of fear, but out of sheer ambition.'*

"Hey! I asked you a question. What did you do to her?" he demanded.

"Nothing yet." Dragon fixed him with a cold stare. "Minster... After what I saw in there, it's not what I did to her that should worry you. It's what I'm going to do."

"Your wife encouraged you to partner with Orochimaru," he stated flatly. "Despite knowing the damage it could cause and the lives it could ruin."

Kuroda's eyes widened in fear and shock. *'He knows.'* "You... you invaded her mind?"

Dragon's eyes narrowed. "Did you think I was bluffing?"

Dragon slowly chuckled and shook his head. He cracked his knuckles and faced the minister. "You two are going to pay. But that can wait till I find out what you have hidden away inside that head of yours."

With those words the disguised Daichi walked forward and he went through several seals. A moment later his hand gripped the head of the minister. His next target for the mind reading jutsu.

Author's Note:

God damn I'm on fire.

Chapter 359 posted in less than 17 hours after 358. My creative juices are flowing.

I got my mojo back.

Also going to make a small edit on the title of these two chapters. I originally thought this would be a two part chapter. But its gonna be 3 part chapter

Not gonna make any promises on when I'll update the next chapter but if it keeps going like this for me, expect one soon. (Like in a day. Not a few hours. Don't wanna get your hopes too high. 😊😂) No promises though...

Lastly, if you enjoyed the chapter, pls do hit that like button.