

## Water Child

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# Water Child

by [wrenuu](#)

## Summary

“...Mikoto-sama’s youngest has come far away from that time, he ought to be a strong child, I’d told you,” he instantly recognized the speaker. It was an older woman, Hikaku’s aunt, the one who is married to the smith who makes his wire. Sasuke was always able to tell her apart from the crowd because her shrill voice was impossible to ignore, grating on his ears and making him avoid her wherever possible, even if her ayu was the best one he’s ever had — better even than Kā-san’s. “The blood does not lie.”

Uchiha Sasuke is born with a heart that does not beat.

## Notes

This is a WIP I've written for the Muse Ariadne prompt of the week of march 31 st — *this week, recycle an old piece (or several) for this club into something new! patch lines together, ideas together, images together. frankenstein it! if you haven't been in this club long, then use any other old writing of yours* (TW: death, mentions of corpses).

See the end of the work for [more notes](#)

Sasuke was born quietly, chest still and limbs loose — tiny lips the color of the sky.

It was not something well known, his unique coming into the world. No need or want to spread the news that Uchiha-dono's second child was a stillborn, until he wasn't.

The first time he hears about it is after sparring inside the clan's training grounds on the east side of the Naka-gawa. Clothes adhered to his torso & hair plastered to his face, Sasuke was drenched, swimming in sweat built up from exercise and from the hot air of the fire coming out of his cracked lips. Bending down in order to pick up the shuriken that had strayed from the path to the wooden circles strung around the clearing, the boy swiftly pockets them inside his leather pouch before walking fast in the direction of the main streets of the Uchiha-gun.

It's while his breaths calm and his blood slows, between one step and another, that he faintly catches the sound of murmurs near one of the many stands decorated with colorful glass being sold.

"...Mikoto-sama's youngest has come far away from that time, he ought to be a strong child, I'd told you," he instantly recognized the speaker. It was an older woman, Hikaku's aunt, the one who is married to the smith who makes his wire. Sasuke was always able to tell her apart from the crowd because her shrill voice was impossible to ignore, grating on his ears and making him avoid her wherever possible, even if her ayu was the best one he's ever had — better even than Kā-san's. "The blood does not lie."

"Well, if you were already so sure, why was I the one who had to hold him while Kichi-sensei tended to his heart? If I remember correctly you were shaking so much you dropped the water basin while crying..."

He takes only a second of hesitation, deciding whether to slowly wander over to the side of the road to hear them better or follow the path to his house — but when he turns around, they are already gone, swallowed rapidly by other heads of similar raven hair.

*A mystery for another day*, it's what his young mind conjured, so he let curiosity flutter away for the sake of running down the weathered course, sandals clouded by dirt, thoughts already settled on the warm bath waiting for him at home.

—

Sasuke's name means 'the one who aids, or brings forth justice', who is fair in their decisions. It could be called lousy, maybe, his parents' decision to be so upfront in their forced guiding — the stronghold of his future career in the *Kemui Butai* a common misunderstanding, just as prevalent as the homage to Sarutobi Hiruzen's sire.

He was named *Sasuke*, because his clan was being scorned to the point of unrest, and it stung the hearts of the rightful to bear such accusations. He is born a symbol of resistance who just by himself shouts, *We are not afraid, we live and continue living despite everything*. Sasuke, only a newborn, already bears the weight of their collective statement: *The Clan perseveres*.

The Uchiha are prideful, it's a truth he acknowledges plenty. They most often prefer the finer silk, and take great care of the edge of their weapons. The shine of their hair is carefully maintained for public decorum and they find contentment in perfection. It's hard not to, while belonging to a group made of people born with the sharpest eyes, made to see all faults, every lie and all truth.

Uchiha Sasuke is born with a heart that does not beat. Almost an ubume when the healer, assisted by the midwife, pulls him forcefully out of his mother's womb. His body, covered by blood and fluids, fitting comfortably in the palm of their hands, is pliant when Kichi-sensei — with only one finger positioned above the pale skin of his chest — pours a quick but powerful lightning shock through his system, making his muscles convulse and contract rapidly.

“He's gone into cardiac arrest!” the man shouts at the older woman beside him who frantically tries to stop Mikoto-sama's hemorrhage.

“My boy,” She murmurs weakly, deliriously, from the bed she is laying down on, dark hair matted and face pale, “Where's my boy, give me my son...”

“She's losing too much blood!” Akane replies, hands stained with red pressed tightly to the wound. It's flowing freely and steadily, and there's a time limit to what they can do.

“We need to restore his sinus rhythm before it's too late,” The healer's eyes are wild with indecision and when he rests them on the child, Kichi-sensei can only recite a prayer under his breath, *Jizō-sama, protect our children, guide them on their path and grant them happiness and well-being*, before finally acting.

“Izanami-no-Mikoto, have mercy on our souls.”)

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When Kakashi hands him a piece of paper and it wrinkles before it turns into ash, Sasuke is not surprised, even though he can feel the weight of the one-eyed stare burning on his back. It's almost laughable, really, he muses, feeling it build inside his chest, the hysterics of it all.

What he knows is this: he has died two times — one before living and the other after he wished he would've stayed dead.

Itachi puts his brother into a coma he does not wish to wake up from.

(Sasuke wakes up a month after the Massacre and the world is different, slightly tilted sideways. There's no one on his bedside and his mother is not outside, waiting. The hospital room is cold, filled only with the constant sound of the machines before older men and women talk to him in unfamiliar soft voices. Inside, he can't help but notice how his arms are too thin, skin more pale than it should be, and how dry his throat has become, making him unable to form a single sentence. The boy sits in silence on top of the white mattress, letting the nurses and the doctors flutter around him like flies looking for an open scab.

The path to the Uchiha-gun, embedded into his mind, is drawn as a blank. No one to greet him, no one inside the gates besides cattle and the crows. Sasuke does not break until he reaches the threshold of the Main House, where he can still smell the tang of iron on the back of his tongue. When he enters the building, his eyes stray, almost as if bewitched, to the corner of the cha-noma, where his parents used to hide during the winter months under the ko-tatsu. He pauses, joints locking down.

*The tatami floors are stained pink*, Sasuke notes distantly, before he is suddenly gazing at the slumped corpse of his father, bisected uchiwa fan a vivid color on his back, almost protectively slouched on top of his mother. He doubles down and throws up, throat burning from the acid and brain whirling.)

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“You are a gentle child.”

Kā-san is stirring a pot on top of the stove in circular motions when she mentions it. From the oven drifts the smell of cooked chicken up to his place on the table, perched on one of the raised wooden chairs, legs swinging back and forth in the air. Sasuke looks up, raising his head from the place between his arms, and smiles hesitantly at her back, unsure.

She doesn't turn, attentively focused on her task, though her voice is firm, soft — iron laced with cotton, “It's not a bad thing, son, to care too much about others.”

“But, Otō-san—” Sasuke, now tense, starts, rather guilty, to try to counter her sentence, before he's interrupted.

“Your father is right,” Mikoto emphasises and continues stirring, “Of course he is.”

Sasuke has been reprimanded enough times to know it, the disapproval. He cowers and does not voice his thoughts out loud, retreating. His mother sighs before shutting down the gas and picking up the pot. She sits beside him and gathers him up on her arms, solid with muscle, warm from the boiling water. With his ear positioned just below her chest, Sasuke can hear the rhythmic beats of her heart, and the organ seems strong, much sturdier than the one inside of himself. He doubts his mother would've ever had a weak organ like his, he thinks.

“The world is made with sharp hands, son, and I fear it was not meant for people like you,” She mutters and starts to scratch his hair, fingers nimble and caring. Her breaths are slow and calming, and Sasuke feels himself being swiftly pulled to sleep.

Mikoto looks at his face, and she sees it with clarity — the dark line of his brows, the soft contour of his neck, the pulse humming steadily on his veins. “We cannot afford to be kind right now, Sasuke,” Her confession is painful, and her eyes are alight with needles, thumb tenderly resting below the thin skin of his closed lids. Mikoto places a kiss on top of them, before whispering, as if praying:

“May there be a future when you can be so.”



## End Notes

- Ayu, also known as sweetfish, is a popular freshwater fish in Japan, especially during the summer months. It's known for its delicate, slightly sweet flavor and is enjoyed in various dishes, most notably grilled and as sushi.
- Jizo Bosatsu is a revered figure in Japanese Buddhism, particularly known as the protector of children, especially those who have died before their parents.
- Izanami (イザナミ), formally referred to with the honorific Izanami-no-Mikoto is the creator of both creation and death.
- "Cha-noma" (茶の間) is a Japanese term that literally translates to "tea room" or "tea space," but often refers to a living room where family and friends gather, share tea, and enjoy each other's company.
- A kotatsu is a relatively inexpensive way to stay warm in the winter, as the futons trap the warm air. Families may choose to concentrate their activity in this one area of the house in order to save on energy costs.
- In cases where both mother and child died, an ubume can appear carrying the bundled corpse of her infant.

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