

Of Friendship and Love

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Of Friendship and Love

by [mussedmusings](#)

Summary

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

I'm working through this story at the moment. I haven't updated the chapters yet because I wanted to let everyone know what was going on before I started changing things. It's just an edit (with a few bits added here and there) but it won't change in its essence/overall plot. I think I'll add 3-5k to it overall, and I'll try my best to correct the mistakes I've made. If anyone wants to Beta this please let me know! 🥰

Notes

If you see continuity problems please let me know. I'm not a fluent English speaker and even though writing this took me a ridiculous amount of time, I'm sure there are still a few mistakes in this.

If you want to talk to me, you can find me on tumblr: [wellthisisawkward-nervermind](#)

Also, I didn't realize it is necessary to add this but apparently it is: PLEASE DON'T REPOST MY WORK ON OTHER SITES. It's seriously uncool.

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

A Beginning

Chapter Notes

EDITED: 20th October 2019



Sasuke stared at the Hokage with unadulterated annoyance. ‘Hn.’

‘Sasuke this is serious. You have attempted to break into her apartment every single night for the past week. If you keep this up it will leave a mark on your permanent record’

Sarutobi sighed tiredly as he mustered the young man before him. ‘I understand that you like her and that you have both been through a lot, but we can’t let this continue.’

Naruko stared at the older man. ‘Why not? We are not doing anything wrong, besides he’s not breaking in. I gave him a key. He just gets tackled by the dog-mask-dude, every time he tries to go through the door like a normal person.’ She groaned

The Hokage blinked at his young charges, both barely thirteen years old. ‘You gave him a key?’

‘Yes, of course, I did. It’s not like him moving out of the apartment was our choice. I didn’t get why you changed the lock in the first place. It’s still his home and if he wants to hang out when I’m not there, he should be able to do that.’ Her tone was getting more and more aggravated.

‘Naruko, we talked about this. You are both young and even though you have been great friends for a long time, it’s not socially acceptable for young boys and girls to live together, before they reach a certain age, or a formal arrangement is made.’

‘Well that’s a stupid rule, besides it’s not like I’m socially accepted, either, ya know? What should I do now, stop existing? Because society dislikes me? I’d rather not.’ She grumbled.

Damn that kid was brutal, and as much as he loathed to admit it, she had a point, Sarutobi thought tiredly.

Sasuke hadn’t said anything yet. He was just staring at him, as if he could set him on fire with his angry glare alone, if he just tried hard enough.

‘It has to stop.’

Naruko deflated, she knew better than to be openly insubordinate.

That’s when the damned Uchiha spoke up. ‘It’s not like anything untoward is happening. I just sleep on the futon and we wake each other up when the nightmares come.’ He said tiredly, dark rings broadcasting his lack of peaceful rest.

‘We’ve been doing this since ‘that’ happened and it helps.’ Naruko admitted.

Sarutobi stared at the two teens in front of him. He had cursed Danzo and the council many times for what they’ve done to the Uchiha, but he had to admit that he cursed himself, too.

If he just had been more attentive then Naruko wouldn’t have been there that day.

Looking back, he should have seen it coming.

Uchiha didn’t do love halfheartedly and their love story had been a long time coming.

X

7 YEARS EARLIER

Naruko started a tentative friendship with Sasuke as soon as the academy started.

Not through usual circumstances, of course.

The young boy had noticed how the academy teachers would try to sabotage her, by showing

her the stances slightly wrong and immediately reported this back to his mother, who in turn had spent a whole lot of time berating the Hokage for his negligence.

‘I can’t believe you didn’t check them!’ She’d exclaimed, storming into his office, Sharingan blazing.

‘Didn’t check who?’

‘Naruko’s teachers. You know they wouldn’t let me take her in, because of the climate and the misguided belief’s around the Sharingan and the Kyuubi! But that doesn’t mean I’m not watching out for her.’

The Sandaime’s eyes widened and he immediately understood what this was about. ‘What happened and who did it? I want names.’ He said with an authority that was almost suffocating.

After that, everything else resolved itself fast. The Hokage wasn’t about to let the fact slide that these *teachers* had been sabotaging a child’s education. Sasuke’s observation might have very well saved Naruko’s life.

To set a warning example he’d ordered for the perpetrator’s to be publicly escorted to T&I.

Mizuku had been especially hard to break, but once they’d learned what the miscreant had planned for the little girl, he was promptly and discretely executed.

At least, Naruko had gained a new friend through the horrid experience. Well, in the beginning he presented himself more as a reluctant teacher.

Sasuke wasn’t about to let the girl struggle through relearning all the Katas alone. So, he decided to teach her and since he had been suffering through the elitism and perfectionism typical for the Uchiha, that meant Naruko had to suffer through it, too.

However, her go-getter attitude and the way she smiled through her failed attempts, got right back up, and tried again, gained her the respect of not only Sasuke, but also the rest of his family.

‘Again!’ He said, looking sharply at her posture.

She breathed a little heavy. ‘Didn’t I get it right this time?’ She asked, honestly concerned. ‘It kind of felt more fluent, easier, ya know?’

Sasuke mustered her with all the strictness, a six-year-old could muster, which was evidently a lot, and said. ‘Again.’

Naruko groaned but complied anyway. She knew the boy was helping her and she also knew that help wasn’t something she had an easy way of getting.

X

Sooner rather than later she was a regular houseguest of the Uchiha main family, much to the horror of Sasuke's fangirls and the council.

The young Uchiha brought her lunch every day and they'd always ate it together.

'What do we get today?' Naruko asked excitedly when they sat down on the roof, far away from the screeching girls.

'Tomato Onigiri, fried chicken and some pickled vegetables, I think.' Sasuke said, hiding his excitement. He loved tomatoes.

Naruko laughed. 'Yum!'

'What are you doing after school?' Sasuke asked.

The question was rhetorical.

'Training.' She said, smiling brightly.

'I guess, we'll train then.' He agreed and Naruko smiled even brighter.

X

They got even cuter, when Sasuke's mom showed Naruko how to knit and sew.

She had to because of the way Naruto was going through her clothes.

They had been training for more than a year now and the training was advanced and challenging, however, the girl's resources weren't oriented on that kind of extensive regimen. What made matters worse, was the fact that the girl was reluctant to accept anything other than practical advice.

'I can't accept that, Mikoto.' She mumbled, with a fierce blush. 'You make me food all the time and I even get to train here and sometimes I stay the night—'

'Naruko, you can either take the money or you can take the clothes. It doesn't matter either way. It's important that you have a few different clothing items. You're a young girl, after all. Besides do you know how boring it is to shop for my boys?'

Indignant groans from two rooms answered her exclamation.

‘Oh, shut up, you two. It’s always dark grey this and black that. The most color I get on you is *dark blue*. Do you have any idea how boring dark blue is?’ She grumbled.

Naruko giggled.

Mikoto always seemed so quiet and graceful next to Fugako, almost timid. It was fun and exhilarating to see that she had this other side. The one she used to tease her boys with. The one that was gentle and happy and protective.

She was incredibly thoughtful. Aggressively so, with the way she bullied Naruko into accepting everything she wanted to do for her, like keeping Naruko’s favorite yoghurt on hand, at all times, even though no one else liked it.

Naruko felt grateful that she’d let her into this inner circle of her family. The place where Mikoto felt comfortable enough to be herself. She felt insanely honored to have any part of this.

However, with the new clothing came new sewing and knitting tips, because she needed to fit the new clothes to her. At the moment she was still shorter than most of the other girls in her class and everything looked kind of wrong on her.

When Mikoto started her on sewing, she also immediately taught her knitting, too, thinking of it as a practical life skill.

So, throughout Naruko’s learning curve, Sasuke waited eagerly for his first present. He knew he’d get one. It was just the way Naruko was, but he was excited for what it would be.

Not even a month after Naruko had started learning he had the honor of wearing her first proper creation.

Ironically, he loved the thing almost as much, as she was proud of creating it: a lot.

It was a slightly uneven knitted black scarf, that had a lot of Uchiha fan in varying sizes stitched into it. It looked really cool in his opinion, really freaking cute in Mikoto’s and was a huge masterpiece in Naruko’s.

Itachi teased him about it a lot, but he reckoned that the older guy was just jealous, because the teasing stopped the moment Naruko gifted him a knitted black beanie, that had also been adorned with the clan symbol.

‘It’s for me?’ Itachi asked, eyes unnoticeably widened and a little surprised.

Naruko smiled her signature toothy smile at him, eyes closed, hands fidgeting behind her back and nodded. ‘I thought a scarf might be impractical for you, because of the high collar.’ She explained, as the older teen looked at her creation and smiled at her.

‘Thank you Naruko. I will treasure it.’ He finally said and the young girl laughed.

X

Before long Naruko had been a regular at the Uchiha house for almost two years and the only time the Uchiha's had ever seen Naruko afraid was the day of the celebration of the Yondaime.

In the past she'd always declined any and all invitations to come with them to a celebration but this time Sasuke had talked her into asking the Hokage for permission.

The tenth October should have been a happy day for the young girl, but it had become a nightmare in her reality.

She had come home with Sasuke after school to tell them that she wouldn't be able to go with them to the celebrations. The Hokage had said she couldn't, and she was really sorry about it.

Mikoto stared at the young girl in understanding, while Sasuke had been furious, with the world. Why couldn't his best friend celebrate this holiday?

He had noticed that she was treated differently, he would have to be blind and dumb, not to.

Fugaku had mustered the small girl and nodded. 'I'll take you home, Naruko.' He said quietly, obviously noticing the girl's distress.

'I'll come with.' Itachi said immediately, picking up on his parent's mood.

'Me, too!' Sasuke said.

However, when they reached Naruto's small, but tidy apartment they saw that a few windows had been destroyed and even though everybody had stepped back from the small, but intimidating group, they still heard the whispers of the demon child. The promises and thinly veiled threats that the otherwise happy villagers threw towards the child, were horrific.

No matter how people viewed Fugaku and what they might have thought of him. He was the head of police and he wouldn't leave a small child in a climate like that.

That night the Uchiha's had brought Naruko back to their estate.

Mikoto had attempted to throw her a small birthday party, she was turning eight after all, but the girl was too scared to have fun.

Every firework let her flinch and every loud voice that filtered through the windows had her on edge. It was a sad insight into what this day had been like for her in the last few years.

Mikoto had brought her to the Hokage the next day. 'She needs to know.'

The Hokage stared at the woman, before nodding towards Naruko. 'Naruko would you please

wait outside for a few minutes?’

Naruko nodded tiredly, after she had left, he regarded Mikoto with fury.

‘You are damned lucky that you didn’t tell her yourself. It is not an S-class secret for nothing.’ He reprimanded.

‘My husband attempted to bring her home yesterday, but he couldn’t in good conscious leave her there. They had thrown stones through her windows and were openly calling her a demon.’ She snarled quietly. ‘The girl was so afraid she couldn’t even sleep. We tried to keep her distracted as best we could. This is not healthy for her. Ignoring her is one thing, openly insulting and threatening her is another. Itachi knows about her and he’s currently talking with his ANBU captain about the villagers he’s seen openly disregarding the S-class ban.’

The Hokage stared at the young woman before him and sighed deeply. ‘They called her demon?’

‘They called her an abomination, a demon, a fox, they openly threatened to finish what the Yondaime couldn’t. If she doesn’t know what this is about it has the potential to destroy her. Sure, she is strong, but consider this, does she really have to be that fucking strong? I think she’s already well aware of the fact that life isn’t fair and that she is quite blatantly put, hated. I can’t imagine that Kushina would have wanted her to be kept in the dark. Not about her parentage and most definitely not about her burden. She would have wanted her to understand.’

The Hokage deflated and rubbed his face tiredly. ‘It was Minato’s last wish.’ He mumbled.

‘Minato also wanted her to be treated like a hero. His wishes obviously don’t matter anymore.’ Mikoto disregarded coldly.

The Sandaime sighed tiredly before he stared at the door and nodded. ‘Bring her in, we’ll talk.’

That day Naruto learned everything about herself. Who her parents were and most importantly: what *she* really was. She wasn’t allowed to tell, but she knew she would tell Sasuke.

‘I’m going to have to tell him.’ She mumbled, when the old man stared at her.

‘Why?’

‘Because he is my best friend and Itachi knows, and his parents know, and he’s not stupid. He’ll know that they know. I won’t have him be kept in the dark by his own family and his best friend.’

She stared at her hands, while the Sandaime gazed at the little girl, astounded by her determination. He would have guessed her to be more like Kushina but looking at her now, he could only see her father.

‘He might not take it too well.’ The Hokage finally said.

Naruko looked up at the old man, in front of her and said, ‘I have faith in him, ya know?’

The Sandaime laughed at her stubbornness but conceded. ‘I hope it isn’t misplaced. His mother will talk to him about what happens if he tells anyone about this, so don’t worry about that, okay? I promise it won’t always be this way. When you turn sixteen you may freely tell anyone you want to know, about all of this. But before then we can’t risk it.’

That night was the first night she snuck into Sasuke’s room.

The young boy had immediately understood what she was trying to say and looked at her with wide eyes, before his whole body shook in anger.

She’d been afraid for a moment, warily even and she had tried to get away from him, but then he spoke.

‘That’s the reason?’

She stared at him.

‘That’s why they treat you like this?’

She shrugged. ‘They are afraid.’

‘No, they are downright stupid. They can’t tell the difference between the scroll and the kunai that’s sealed inside it.’ He seethed.

Naruko stared at him for a second, before she giggled and before long her giggles were accompanied by tears.

‘Why are you crying?’ Sasuke asked shocked and slightly mortified.

He’d never seen Naruko cry, not even after what happened yesterday.

‘I’m glad.’ She said. ‘I’m glad you’re not stupid and I’m glad we’re still friends.’ She mumbled and hugged him tightly.

He snorted. ‘I’m an Uchiha. We’re never stupid.’ He said snootily but he hid his smile in her long blonde hair as he squeezed her right back.

Not even a month later the two of them walked into a horrid scene.

The Uchiha district was riddled with dead bodies.

Afraid beyond belief and shaking, they'd run for Sasuke's home in the hope of finding his parents unharmed, but they had no such luck.

Itachi had just finished killing Fugaku when they showed up, with tears streaming down their faces.

Then Itachi stood before them.

Sasuke didn't want to believe what had happened but Naruko realized what the older teen was trying to do, the moment he activated his weird looking Sharingan, and she held her hands over Sasuke's eyes, trying to protect him from the genjutsu, while glaring angrily at Itachi.

The older man stared at her in shock, before he smiled. 'Protect each other.' He said, before he schooled his features and added, much darkly. 'Grow strong and defeat me.'

The pale youth looked honestly traumatized.

If Naruko hadn't known what horrid things the man had just done, she would have reached out to hug him.

But as it stood, she just kept her hands firmly on Sasuke's eyes and pulled her friend towards her.

Itachi smiled at the fierceness in the young girl's eyes and vanished.

Before long they were surrounded by ANBU and brought to a hospital.

Sasuke had been ordered to stay so that they could watch him more closely.

He was traumatized.

They also kept him because they wanted to make sure that he truly hadn't been under the Tsukuyomi, which he hadn't.

Naruko guessed they needed the time to clean up the clan land, too.

Either way she was by his side.

Bringing him his favorite food after school and staying until some nurse came and told her that visiting hours were over, became part of her day.

On the weekends she stayed the whole day, only going away for food runs.

Sometimes she even managed to climb in through his window before school and napped a little with him.

It took him two weeks to talk again.

She didn't push him.

Instead she talked about her day or what they were doing at school. She always brought him his homework and explained how she solved hers.

She also told him about the new tomato plant she bought for her apartment.

After two weeks she brought some new wool and started knitting.

'What's it going to be?' He asked hoarsely, after watching her for a good hour.

'Mittens.'

'Mittens?'

'Mittens.' Naruko said. Then she lost the concentrated look and stared at her best friend.

He had talked to her.

'They are for you.' She added belatedly.

He nodded. 'Dark blue is a good color.' He agreed and she nodded.

'It looks good on you.'

He cocked his head. 'Will you put the Uchiha symbol on them?' He asked cautiously.

Naruko looked up in surprise. 'Of course!' She exclaimed, as if she hadn't even thought about not putting it on them.

He looked down at his hands and smiled sadly. 'That's good.' He finally said.

She nodded. 'This time it will all be matching. You'll get a scarf and a beanie, too.'

He stared at his friend.

The only one he wanted to see right now. Well, except for the people he would never be able to see again.

She was the only one he had left.

The only one he could tolerate in this sea of betrayal and sadness that seemed to surround him.

She didn't cry over him, as if he died with them.

She didn't do anything really, besides be there for him.

Making sure he had his favorite food, doing little things for him, she knew he would like.

Talking to him, distracting him.

It took him a while to realize that he was crying.

But he couldn't lose the terror.

He had been terrified when he saw Itachi.

Shocked still.

Not knowing what was going on, hoping it was different than it seemed, and then his brother had almost put him under the Tsukuyomi. Only Naruko's quick thinking had saved him.

She'd put her hands over his eyes and pulled him close and she'd stared his brother down.

He just knew it, even if he hadn't seen it happen.

He stared at his hands again.

He hadn't been able to do anything.

He'd been *weak*.

He realized that she was hugging him now.

Pressing him close and running her hand up and down his upper back, in silent comfort.

'I'm sorry.' He whispered brokenly.

She pulled back and he could see her bright blue eyes widen impossible.

'You have nothing to be sorry for.' She said shocked.

He shook his head and clenched his fists into the soft linen of the hospital bed. 'I froze. I was weak and I hesitated. If he had tried to kill us, too, I would have been completely useless.' He said.

Naruko's eyes widened. 'If he had tried to kill us too, almost every Shinobi I know would have been completely useless.' She said in consternation.

'Sasuke, the only reason I didn't freeze up was because he wasn't focused on me. He was focused on you. Itachi is scary strong and he was brutal and cruel, and I can't believe he wanted to use the Tsukuyomi on you. But none of what happened makes you weak.'

The way she said that left little to no doubt that she believed it from the bottom of her heart and something in Sasuke loosened, let the tension seep out. He realized that he'd needed to hear this.

'I'm so sorry this happened to you.' Naruko whispered before pulling him back in for another hug.

'You really don't think I'm weak because of this?' He asked sounding almost broken.

'I think your incredibly strong.' She said earnestly against his shoulder and then he finally hugged her back.

They stayed like that for a while.

X

Sasuke received the keys to his clan house after he got released from the hospital.

Naruko silently scoffed at the notion that her friend would want to go back there, after everything that had happened there.

She knew that she would never forget the bodies that littered the way, the last time she walked through the Uchiha district and she couldn't imagine that Sasuke felt different.

'Do you want to stay with me?' She asked carefully while Sasuke stared at her.

After a few short moments, he nodded. 'Let's get some of my stuff.'

She agreed.

Two hours later Sasuke had basically moved in.

Next to her bed was a futon laid out for him.

His school books were in her bookshelf, his toiletries in her bathroom and his clothes in her drawers. And life went on.

They always changed in the bathroom, so that they wouldn't accidentally walk in on each other.

They cooked together, they did their homework together and they trained together.

The only times they were apart were when Naruko had to go to Kunoichi training and Sasuke had to go to therapy.

Naruko had a hard time with his fan girls there, which pissed Sasuke off to no end.

She didn't quite come out and say it, but he didn't need to be a genius to understand that there was a reason she didn't have a single female friend.

His therapist had been curious about his friendship with her, so he told her a little about it.

The woman had told him that it was rare for friends to be so close and that he should treasure that, but that it was also important to try to make more friends.

When he told Naruko about it, more annoyed than anything else, she had nodded and told him that they could try to make more friends, together.

She reasoned that if his therapist thought it was a good idea and he didn't think it was the worst idea, it wouldn't harm them to try and make it happen.

The first new friend they made was Chouji.

Mostly because Naruko loved snack food and Chouji was always eating one kind or the other.

Engaging Chouji in a discussion about flavors wasn't really Sasuke's preferred way to spend his past time, but he pulled through and not shortly after they were both invited to have lunch with him and Shikamaru.

Cloud watching with Shikamaru was something he could get behind.

The guy was silent, but when he said something it seemed weirdly important and Sasuke could appreciate that.

'She's really good for you.' Was the first thing Shikamaru said to him and they'd been lying in the grass for almost half an hour at that point.

Sasuke stared at him for a moment, trying to bite down his automatic 'Hn.' response. Naruko had told him that the 'Hn.' should only be reserved for people he was unsure about, mad at, or disliked in general. All the other groups deserved more than that in a conversation. Of course, he'd answered her with a 'Hn.' to rile her up a little, but he'd silently agreed that monosyllabic answers weren't the best strategy for getting to know new people.

'I know.' He finally said.

'You're good for her, too.' Shikamaru conceded.

Sasuke stared at the other boy. 'Have you been watching her a lot?' He finally asked, somewhat peeved that the blonde had garnered the Nara's interest.

The Nara shrugged. 'She seems like she's going to be important.' He elaborated.

Sasuke wasn't sure what to say to that, so he leaned back and tried to relax some more.

With all the training he was doing, he needed the break, mentally and physically.

Hearing Naruko laugh with Chouji was nice too.

Apparently, they had traded bentos and were both convinced that the other's bento was the best each of them ever had. He heard Shikamaru snort next to him and realized that the other boy was listening to them, too.

He could do this, he realized. Not every day and not for a long time, because that would feel like a waste, but hanging out, watching clouds and not talk, was more fun than he expected.

The only other friend the two of them made was Kiba.

Naruko had pushed for that for a whole week, before he had let her drag him to the dog boy and he was still convinced that her sudden desire to befriend the Inuzuka stemmed mostly from the fact that she thought Akamaru was awesome.

'You can play with his dog without befriending him.' He argued.

'Why would I do that?' She asked exasperated. 'He's fun and loud and he doesn't care what other people think.'

'That's not a good thing, Naruko.' Sasuke had tried.

'You also don't care what other people think.' She said exasperated.

'Yeah, but I don't scream it at them. I show it to them, by being better than them.'

Naruko groaned and facepalmed. Her friend could be really snooty when he wanted to be.

Sasuke stared warily at the girl beside him. She could be loud and funny, too. Maybe, that's why she wanted the guy in the group.

He sighed and nodded.

When they turned around, they saw that Kiba had been sitting right in front of them, watching their argument, the entire time.

He stared at the two of them for a moment, before he smiled at a flushed and more than slightly embarrassed Naruko.

'I'll be your friend.' He said. 'Akamaru likes the way you smell.'

He elaborated. 'He's a good judge of character.'

Naruko smiled happily at him, before she realized something. 'What about Sasuke?' She asked critically.

Kiba stared at the Uchiha for a moment.

'We'll get there.' He finally said, while Sasuke nodded and they were rewarded with a bright smile from the blonde.

'Great!' She said and proceeded to play with Akamaru.

There little group wouldn't grow bigger than that, at least not for the time being.

X

Sasuke and Naruko were at the top of the class, mostly because Sasuke was insanely driven and ambitious or as Naruko called it 'ambitchious'.

If she hadn't known about the Uchiha elitism and perfectionism, before the massacre, she would have declared Sasuke's well-planned training as absolutely insane.

However, with the insight she had, she could confidently say that he wasn't overdoing it.

Sasuke knew exactly when he needed to stop, so that he wouldn't overexert his body.

He also planned in breaks and time with their friends and since they were always training together, she had been dragged along to the top of the class, with him.

It wasn't like it was a hardship to train with Sasuke or to discuss her homework assignments with him or to research chakra control exercises with him, when they noticed she was horrid at that.

Okay that last one was a lie.

It started to become kind of shitty, after Sasuke realized how much trouble she had with chakra control.

After a month of slow progress, he had dragged her to the Hokage and asked him if it was the Kyuubi's fault.

The Hokage had blinked at the two teens in front of him.

The raven looked impeccable and was obviously very concerned, while the blonde looked like she had fought an entire forest and came out as the loser.

She glared deeply annoyed at the Uchiha and seemed more than ready to punch some sense into her friend.

After the Hokage had the head of the medic department, Ryosuke Watanabe check her out, it was established that her chakra was extremely dense and the volume she had was also extraordinary large, which wasn't unusual for the Uzumaki clan.

Apparently, her mother had been the same.

Ryosuke was incredibly nice to her and started to describe the style of control exercises she would have to do.

After a while he shook his head. 'Listen, Naruko, I trained your mother in the basics of medical ninjutsu, I know everything there is to know about how hard this part will be for you. How would you feel about coming in tomorrow afternoon? We can start with me teaching you some basic control and maybe you'll even learn how to heal a scratch or two?'

Naruko stared at the older medic with something akin to awe. 'Yes, thank you. I'll be there!' She finally said, smiling happily. 'I'm just happy I don't have to kill Sasuke by braining him against a tree repeatedly.' She sighed, exasperated.

Ryosuke laughed. 'You had her climbing trees?' He asked the young blushing Uchiha.

'It was the recommended beginner exercise.' He mumbled.

'You couldn't have known about my chakra.' Naruko conceded and Sasuke nodded.

The Hokage laughed at the two of them, before sending them back.

Suffice to say Naruko spent the following months extensively training her chakra control, by the time her twelve-birthday rolled around she had learned her chakra, understood how it worked and gotten a feel for how much was required.

In other words, she now had great chakra control and decided to volunteer at the hospital in her free time to learn more about medic ninjutsu.

Her kunoichi classes were kind of hard for her at the moment.

Not only because of how much the other girls disliked her, but also because of the themes they were handling.

They were handling how different kunoichi were treated from shinobi, when they were captured. The reality was that they were often exposed to a different kind of torture, namely rape.

They spoke about the consequences and what could be done when they ever found themselves in a situation like that.

That had been an incredibly harsh lesson and she'd been kind of down the whole day after it happened.

When Sasuke asked her about it and she explained what they were talking about he was furious.

'We're training incredibly hard. We'll grow strong together, we'll get on a team together and I won't ever, ever, leave you behind.' He promised her with so much sincerity that she could only nod and smile.

She hadn't been down exactly, because she thought it would happen to her.

She'd just been saddened that that was something she had to learn in school about, like it was expected that it would happen at some point during her career.

X

By the time Sasuke was twelve and a half-ish, his therapist was extremely proud to tell him that they could stop seeing each other, if he wanted.

Naruko and Sasuke tried to make a simpler version of his favorite food, tonkatsu with a huge tomato salad, and celebrated that afternoon.

That was always their way of celebration. They'd try to recreate their favorite dishes.

Making them from scratch always left them feeling proud.

After that they'd walk around a little or sat down by the riverside or go out to play with their friends.

Sasuke had never thought that his life would be filled with so much happiness after everything that happened. It hadn't even been four whole years, yet.

They never went out to celebrate the tenth October.

But Sasuke started to try and make some kind of sweet dessert for her to celebrate her birthday and of course Ramen.

But he had made her swear to him that she would not touch the instant stuff again. They'd either make it from scratch or eat at Ichiraku's.

After she turned thirteen kunoichi training seriously starting to stress Naruko out.

In their last lesson they had gone over acceptable clothing options and hairstyles for Kunoichi and Naruko had failed majorly. Much to the amusement of the petty girls in her class.

So, today's mission was her own.

She'd get some clothes that wouldn't garner her the wrath of her teachers or make her fail the class.

She sighed deeply before she went into the first store.

She hated shopping and would have used a Henge, but she actually had to see how the stuff would look on her.

She quickly decided that she didn't want to wear a dress and she also realized quickly that she liked layers, even if the clothing was tight. She also had been heavily criticized for her color combinations, so she kept the outfit as boring as possible.

Sorting through everything she wanted from an outfit, she came to a quick decision.

The most practical option for her fighting style would be a short black skirt, that was partially split at the sides, under which she would wear black biker shorts, that matched its length. It made sense for agility and she wouldn't have to worry about modesty with the shorts.

On top she'd wear a fitted, dark green, high cut tank top. She also bought herself a long-sleeved black mesh shirt, to go under the green top, but since the weather was still really warm and she didn't have a team or missions yet, she wouldn't have to wear it for quite some time.

She liked wearing her hair open but apparently that was unacceptable with her hair length, so she went out and bought a few small orange clips to clip her fringe to the side and some translucent elastic hair bands for Kunoichi, that claimed they wouldn't tear no matter what happened to them.

Naruko wasn't sure why, but somehow that promise felt like a challenge.

After that whole ordeal, she wanted to go home and sleep forever, but she still had to buy make up. Sighing she dragged herself into the next cosmetics store and searched for the brand and the colors her teacher had recommended for her.

The older woman had a grace and a fierceness unlike anything Naruko had ever seen in an elder lady.

She'd taken the young blonde aside, before letting her go and written down what skin shade number she would need, and which brand would be acceptable to use as a kunoichi.

Apparently, there was scented stuff in the civilian make up, that could mean her and her teams' death against a tracker, so she would definitely adhere to the stuff listed on the note.

After a way too long time, she found everything she needed. It wasn't all that much, just moisturizer, mascara, foundation, concealer, rouge, tinted lip balm and an eyeliner.

She'd also bought make up remover and cotton buds, because she had tried applying the hell that was eyeliner before in class, and she knew she wouldn't get the deal done without a shitload of those cotton buds.

But since there had also been a suggestion to get nail polish, she bought that too.

She was unsure how much more color was allowed. So far, she technically only had dark green, black and the orange clips, but she had a feeling she'd get in trouble if she tried something that she'd really like. Like neon orange.

She sighed for what felt like the thousandth time that day and just went for a dark red nail polish, that looked a lot like the one she had seen on the elder lady and a black one, she thought Sasuke might like.

Happy with her purchase, she went back home, to try everything out, making sure everything looked right, so, she wouldn't get shit for it the next day.

Technically, she should have adjusted her outfit over the last few weeks, but she procrastinated doing it until the last minute.

She didn't see the merit in changing her appearance at all. The boys didn't have to do it.

Thankfully Sasuke wasn't there to see her struggling with the skirt and the biker shorts. The shorts and the skirt were a little too long, so she had to hem them accordingly.

Now everything ended neatly mid-thigh.

The top fit her perfectly and she had to admit that she felt really comfortable in the outfit. It was still stretchy and functional but aesthetically speaking it looked much more mature than the bright orange sweatpants and a black tank top she usually wore everywhere.

Her hair was the next order of business and since she hadn't seen fit to get the generic bob haircut of the elderly around the village, she now had to learn how to braid it neatly.

It took an hour and it sucked half her life force out of her, but she somehow managed to pull it off.

After carefully pinning her fringe to the side she went back to the mirror, reevaluated the outfit. And to her horror she liked how she looked, now. Damnit.

Next step was make-up and since she wasn't going to make herself do anything, she wasn't able to recreate quickly and effortlessly she ignored the eyeliner and foundation.

This was after all supposed to show them, that she'd thought about how she wanted to look and more importantly, how she wanted to be perceived, from now on, as a Kunoichi.

She just used some concealer under her eyes, some tinted lip balm and mascara. It was simple, looked like she put in a bit of effort and helped convey that she was practical.

She smiled at her handy work. Under two minutes. That was great, she decided, before she moved on to nail polish.

Since she was trying to cater to the women who taught them, she went with the dark red nail polish and hoped for the best.

After that was done, she leaned back on the couch and groaned pathetically.

The day was almost over, she hadn't seen Sasuke yet, she hadn't eaten yet and she still had to wait for who knows how long before her painted fingernails were dry.

Being a girl really sucked, sometimes.

When Sasuke came home he brought Ichiraku's with him, because he knew what today was.

She had been calling it doom day for the past week.

When he saw her, he took a moment to muster her and finally smiled, after what felt like ages. 'You did great. I can't imagine that they are going to fail you now!' He said encouragingly and Naruko, who was beyond happy about the Ichiraku's, just laughed and said.

'They better not! You have no idea what I went through today.'

They spent the rest of the evening resting and Sasuke told her all about his training with someone named Rock Lee, while she painted his nails black.

She thought it would suit him and he'd been curious, so whatever.

Needless to say, she passed that class, big time.

However now that she looked so mature, she garnered another kind of attention.

One that neither her nor Sasuke knew how to handle.

Sasuke had taken to glaring at the guys whose gazes would linger longer than was appropriate and she had simply taken to ignoring them the same way she ignored the hateful looks from some villagers.

X

Since most people didn't really pay attention to Naruko and her living situation it took a long time, until anyone, who would actually be bothered by it, figured out that she and Sasuke

were living together.

Maybe it hadn't happened yet, because most people just thought Sasuke would bring Naruko home, when they walked around together late at night.

Everyone knew that they shopped together and cooked together, so having the same bentos wasn't a huge deal.

Apparently, living together kind of was.

It all came out when Iruka wanted to ask Sasuke to be his teaching aid for the fresh academy students.

It was a crisp Saturday morning and he couldn't find the boy anywhere.

He certainly wasn't in the Uchiha district and by the looks of it hadn't been in quite some time.

So, he naively assumed that the teen had just forgotten to update his address and went to Naruko's, to ask her for directions.

Naturally, there was hell to pay, after Sasuke opened the door to Naruko's apartment in his boxers, a training shirt, obvious bed hair and with a tooth brush dangling from the side of his mouth, while asking, 'Can we talk outside? Naruko is still asleep.'

Iruka had stared at the teen in horror and then pushed his way inside, without any reservation.

The first thing he noticed was how tidy the place was, the next thing was how many plants there were and then he noticed that everything about this flat screamed cohabitation.

Cosmetics were neatly piled on a tray by the windowsill next to a small mirror, while shirts with the Uchiha emblem were strung along a line on the balcony.

Their shoes were standing neatly side by side in the Genkan.

The book shelf had a clear distinction between Uchiha clan scrolls and Academy books and Naruko's kunoichi curse magazines.

Sasuke made a disgruntled noise behind him.

'What are you doing here sensei?' He asked.

'I came here to ask my sweet, innocent little student, Naruko, if she knew where you lived.' Iruka snarled venomously.

'Hn.' Sasuke murmured, while Iruka made his way along the hallway, that was riddled with pictures of them, of Sasuke's family, of their friends at the academy with them, of different meals, with little dates and milestones noted underneath.

The latest one was an obviously homemade Ramen with a little thirteen and Naruto's name on it.

There was also one of Naruko with the Hokage, when she was around three years old.

He was going to lose it.

This was not just cohabitation.

This was a couple living together.

Celebrating together.

They were thirteen damnit.

When he walked towards the bedroom, Sasuke slammed himself between him and the door, which made Iruka even more suspicious.

'What? Isn't she decent?' He asked angry.

Sasuke shook his head. 'No, she is decent.'

When Iruka made to grab the door again, Sasuke shoved his hand away again.

The teacher felt his killing instinct rise and he contemplated for the first time ever, if slightly maiming a student was really all that unacceptable.

'We're not... Nothing like that is going on, yet.' He assured.

'Yet?' Iruka grunted.

The Uchiha completely ignored the other man's hysteria and told him seriously and with an authority no thirteen-year-old should possess.

'If you barge in like that, you're going to freak her out. This is her home. She has a right to feel safe in her own home.'

Iruka paled slightly.

Of course. He nodded.

'Go wake her up, then.'

Sasuke opened the door and he immediately looked over his shoulder, inside.

The bedroom was small, there were even more pictures there and a huge tomato plant, he leaned to the side to get a better view of the bed and was immensely relieved, when he saw that there was a well-used futon next to the bed. One that was obviously for the Uchiha.

He let out a huge sigh.

He wasn't as naïve to think that this meant nothing was happening between them, mostly because he could see that the Uchiha seemed to deeply care for her and that Naruko must care for him, too, to let him live with her.

'Yet' he thought again and grumbled internally.

A moment later Naruko stood in front of him. In a tank top and a pair of boxers that were most definitely from the Uchiha. He groaned and palmed his face.

She still had the imprints of her cushion on her face and her hair was slightly ruffled.

'We need to talk.' He said and Naruko's eyes widened.

'What are you doing here, Iruka?' She asked surprised.

'I was searching for Sasuke and thought you might be able to tell me where he is.'

Naruko stared at him for a second. 'Next to me?' She asked and they could tell she wasn't really awake yet.

'I'm making coffee.' Sasuke said, as he walked away from the two of them.

Iruka was increasingly sure that the raven was trying to evade him. The boy had always been smart.

'Wait, I'm gonna put more clothes on. Ya know?' Naruko mumbled to Iruka, went back to the bedroom and came out with a long-sleeved dark shirt that was emblazoned with the Uchiha symbol, that was obviously too big for her and some of those tight fitted kunoichi leggings every woman in Konoha possessed.

She was in the process of braiding her hair to one side, when she sat down next to him.

Great they were sharing clothes. He was going to have an Aneurysm.

When she went to sit down Sasuke brought them coffee, put down milk and a little sugar container.

Iruka stared at it and wanted to laugh. No thirteen-year-old had any business being this domestic. The whole flat should be chaotic, the fact that the cups didn't belong to a set and were all different sized and different colored, helped him through the moment.

'So, Naruko have you been sexually active?' He asked, while the blonde coughed into her coffee and the Uchiha blushed bright red.

'No.' She said, when she could breathe again, eyes wide and indignant.

‘How long have you and Sasuke been living together?’

Naruko looked at Sasuke, before she shrugged. ‘Around five years, I think.’

Iruka stared at them. ‘Why did no one follow up on this?’ He asked shocked.

‘People tend to ignore me and what I do.’ Naruko said shrugging.

Sasuke nodded. ‘I’m not exactly approachable and I don’t try to be.’

Yeah sure.

Great.

Okay.

Iruka stared at the cups again. Four or five years. That’s longer than any relationship he ever had, he thought shocked.

‘How did this happen?’

‘I asked him to move in.’ Naruko said shrugging.

‘My whole clan had just been murdered and for some reason people expected me to want to go live on clan land again.’ Sasuke said, still bitter about that.

Iruka stared at the two of them. ‘Are you together?’

Naruko and Sasuke looked at each other, before Naruko asked. ‘Like as a couple?’

Iruka nodded.

Sasuke and Naruko stared at each other again. They both looked hopeful, this was ridiculous. ‘We don’t know.’ Sasuke finally said and Naruko snorted.

Iruka stared at the two of them ‘Did you just—? I am too old for this shit.’ He groaned.

‘Okay, that’s it, kids. We’re going to the Hokage.’

‘Why?’ Sasuke asked annoyed.

‘Because until you turn fourteen and make Genin you are not allowed to live together.’

‘Are you serious?’ Naruko asked.

‘That’s in seven months.’ She groaned.

‘We have a system, Iruka. We got this down to an art. We even have a budget plan and a cleaning roster.’ She grumbled.

‘You can spend your days how you want to. You just can’t sleep at the same place.’

‘That doesn’t make any sense. If we wanted to get up to something, we could just do that during the day, then.’ Sasuke gritted out through clenched teeth, obviously struggling with the idea of giving his home up, because of some stupid rule.

‘You make a great point. I’ll supervise you during random evenings. I have to grade tests anyway and Naruko and I haven’t been talking all that much these last few weeks.’ Iruka smiled, obviously set on pissing Sasuke off.

‘Okay.’ Naruko intercepted.

‘Okay. Iruka we’ll meet you in an hour at the Hokage tower. We still have to get dressed and eat something or is this issue so urgent that it cannot wait another hour?’ She asked tensely.

He could understand her. If he made them leave the house now, everyone would immediately judge them or shame them. They really should get ready properly.

‘I’ll give you an hour and if you’re not there by then, I’ll drag you there.’ He said the last part to the Uchiha, who just nodded complacently.

After Iruka left Naruko took a moment to stare at her hands before she turned towards her best friend and roommate and family.

He slowly tugged at her hand and looked at her.

‘I think I have some pretty serious feelings for you.’ She finally said.

Just like that. No decorum. No nothing. Sasuke smiled at her.

One of his real smiles. ‘Yeah?’ He asked playfully.

Naruko smiled.

‘Pretty sure. I mean I still hung out with you after that month of chakra training.’ She said laughing quietly, while Sasuke blushed furiously.

‘Sounds serious.’ He finally said, while she hummed.

He stared at his hands for a moment, before he turned to her.

‘I’ve known for a while that I have feelings for you.’ She stared at him and then broke out into the biggest, happiest smile she’d ever shared with him.

He felt himself blush even deeper.

‘I’m not great at opening up to people.’ He finally admitted and Naruko had the audacity to snort and say ‘Shocker.’

He flicked her forehead for that one, before he continued.

‘With you it’s always been different.’ Naruko nodded and leaned into him when he pulled her into a hug.

‘Can I kiss you?’ She finally asked kind of muffled against his chest.

He didn’t answer that, he pulled her up slightly and let her take over.

She leaned into him and slowly let her lips meet his.

He felt the tingling sensation in his whole body.

He felt himself tense and made a conscious effort to relax again and then her lips were on his. She slowly pressed them against his and teased him by slightly licking against his bottom lip, when he opened up, her tongue slid against his own, he replied in kind and slowly slid his hand to the back of her neck.

Much of their last hour together in their home, was spent making out and the two of them didn’t regret it in the least.

They made it in time for their interrogation with the Hokage. Both dressed impeccably and nervous.

X

The Hokage didn’t take the news that well.

Sadly, they had been right to be nervous. After Iruka had reported everything back to the Sandaime, he had focused on the two teens in front of him.

He wasn’t sure what to feel, it didn’t make sense for him to feel betrayed or disappointed since no one had followed up on either Sasuke’s nor Naruko’s living situation.

It hadn’t made sense to direct the ANBU that way, because they were both in the academy and seemed happy and healthy.

He groaned. Minato would kill him and castrate the Uchiha, in the afterlife.

‘You’re moving out.’ He finally bit out. Fixating cold eyes on Sasuke. ‘There’ll be no arguments. You’ll leave the flat today and while you two are permitted to spent time with each other, I want Iruka there with you to supervise when you’re meeting up. Let’s say every other evening?’

He paused for a moment and watched Iruka, who grimaced but nodded. Every other evening was a lot.

The two teens had never seen the Hokage like this, he seemed calmly furious.

Well, shit. Naruko thought.

‘Where will I live?’ Sasuke asked, braving the man.

‘Uchiha compound.’

‘Absolutely not.’ Naruko stepped in and didn’t even wither under the pointed glare of the Hokage. ‘If you want him to be able to sleep, you won’t sent him there to live.’ She said pointedly.

‘I’ll make other arrangements.’ Sarutobi conceded and nodded. ‘You’ll be told where you can move, in two hours, be ready by then.’

Sasuke looked paler than usual and felt honestly like shit.

These people hadn’t cared about either of them up until this point. Not really, anyway. A distant parental figure that would talk to them every now and then and who you could come to if you had a problem you absolutely couldn’t solve on your own.

But they weren’t supposed to be like that.

How dare they take away his home?

The only place he’d lived and felt safe since the massacre.

He felt betrayed and angry. Naruko took his hand in hers and slowly caressed the back of his hand with her thumb.

‘I’ll buy some stuff for your new flat, okay? Print out some of our pictures, get some plants. Take what you want from our place, but remember that we can still eat together at either place and spend time together, whenever. It’s not forever.’

She smiled encouragingly at him. ‘If you think you’re not taking a bag full of my stuff with you, as well, so that I have a few essentials there, too, you’re dead wrong.’

He heaved a deep sigh before he pulled her into a hug and breathed in the smell of her hair. ‘It’s just what? Seven months? I can do that. We can do that.’ He mumbled.

‘Of course, we can.’ Naruko encouraged while stroking his neck. ‘Think of it as a mission. Protect Naruko’s virginity at all costs. Step one, relocate the Uchiha. Step two, assign Iruka as chaperone.’

They snorted.

‘In all honesty he’s probably trying to make up for being negligent to either of us and thinks he’s somehow helping now, by being a huge pain in the ass.’ Naruko murmured.

‘It sucks that we’re not old enough to decide these things for ourselves but are apparently capable enough to live alone by the age of six. That’s ridiculous.’

Naruko sighed. ‘We did the best we could, and we did well for ourselves. At least that’s what I think.’ She said, as she untangled herself from the hug.

Sasuke smiled down at her. ‘I agree.’ Then he groaned. ‘I’m going to pack my stuff now.’

Naruko gasped and placed a hand on her chest. ‘Do you mean we’re over?’ She asked theatrically and Sasuke snorted.

His girlfriend was a huge dork, sometimes.

When they went to see his apartment, they were surprised to see that it was only two buildings away.

Since he was an Uchiha, everything he had in there was slightly nicer than average, which pissed him off.

Everything Naruko had, had been slightly below average and they'd put in effort to make the place as welcoming as it was.

Speaking of welcoming, Naruko was already taping pictures of them, his parents, their friends and their celebratory food to the walls.

She had also bought six new plants and distributed them in the apartment. It had a similar layout like Naruko’s. However, the bath wasn’t as big as hers. She had a bathtub and everything and he had one of those shitty modern showers.

After they were done it looked somewhat better. Not warm or welcoming in the way their home was, but he guessed that was just because Naruko hadn’t moved in with him.

Sadly, the place didn’t even smell right.

They spent all of an hour in there setting everything up, before going back to their place and eating together.

The rest of the day they just pretended that Sasuke was still living there. They bought their groceries, made their training plan for the week and tried to fit in breaks for friends and

downtime.

When they were done, they napped and made out a little more.

That night Sasuke woke up around two in the morning from light and restless sleep and decided after two seconds of contemplation that he'd pretend that it was morning.

So, he picked up his keys and went to Naruko's apartment only to be tackled by an ANBU in dog mask, before he even made it to the door. His life sucked.

Naruko seemed alright, but he slept worse and worse each night. His plans, to break into their apartment were getting better and better, but the dog ANBU intercepted either way.

The lack of sleep was decidedly bad for Sasuke's character.

It meant he had even less tolerance for his fan girls and the way they treated Naruko.

Things suddenly seemed more important. Sitting together, eating lunch together, going back to the apartment together and good god napping together, were his new favorite activities.

However, some girls just didn't really understand that they had no claim on him.

He could like and want who he liked and wanted, and they just had to deal with it. He wasn't about to keep anything concerning Naruko a secret.

Looking back, he admitted that he'd reacted a bit hot heatedly. But you couldn't blame him. He hadn't gotten more than three hours of sleep each night, for the past two weeks.

Naruko wasn't fairing all that bad. He tried not to be too bitter about it.

Anyway, it started before history and it was absolutely stupid.

The two most aggressive fan girls had come up to him. Naruko knew who they were and immediately hid her emotions. The girls were very obviously screeching at each other.

'Ino-pig, get away from him, I was here first and it's my turn to sit next to him.' She called out, while the other one gave as good as she got.

'Really Sakura or should I call you giant forehead? You really think—'

He had honestly stopped listening at this point and was ignoring everything that happened at his right side, when the girls came to a decision.

'Naruko go sit somewhere else. It's our turn to sit next to Sasuke. Stop trying to keep him all to yourself.' Sakura said obviously annoyed.

Ino didn't say anything. Probably because she could see Sasuke's angry face, while Sakura focused on Naruko.

She groaned loudly. 'Naruko. Stop pretending you can't hear me. Get out of that seat!' She said rather loudly again. 'What right do you have—'

Sakura continued as Sasuke turned to Naruko and tipped her shoulder, she looked at him surprised, but before she could ask what was going on, he had pulled into a searing hot kiss, with tongue and everything.

When they pulled apart a few moments later it was deadly silent and then they heard Iruka scream. 'Not you two again! What the hell Sasuke? Yes, you have a girlfriend, no need to freaking eat her face at school. Got it?' He commanded, while Naruko had blushed brightly and Sasuke just smiled self-satisfied.

The silence was nice, he thought and then the weirdest thing happened. In a volume nobody could have anticipated, Sakura screamed, 'You stole my first kiss.' and tried to launch herself at Naruko.

Naruko stared at the girl in front of her, then at Sasuke and asked 'What?'

Ino seemed equally as angry, as did several other girls, but they didn't voice their concerns.

Sasuke groaned, Naruko glared at him, Sakura screeched at her and tried to grab her, while Iruka restrained her.

'Happy now?' She asked gesturing to the mess. Sasuke looked down at the table.

'The kissing part was really nice.' He finally conceded.

Naruko laughed as she let herself lay down on the table in front of her, resting her head on her crossed arms and watching Iruka escort Sakura out.

'I don't think it worked the way you hoped it would.' She finally said and he couldn't have stopped it if he wanted to.

He laughed.

Ino stared at the two of them for a moment before she sat down next to Sasuke.

'So, I lost?' She finally asked.

Sasuke looked at her. 'Don't take it personally, but there was no competition.' He finally said.

The girl nodded, feeling immature and silly and kind of weird for having pushed so hard. In the end, she may have escalated things and confused stuff because of her rivalry with Sakura and her need to win against her.

She groaned. 'Sakura is going to take this the hardest.'

Sasuke stared at her, completely uncomprehending. 'I've never even talked to her. It's just a silly crush isn't it?' He asked somewhat annoyed.

Ino blushed even harder, she didn't know if she was embarrassed for Sakura or because of her own behavior.

'Let's hope so.' She finally said.

X

That evening Iruka was at Naruko's apartment for a surprise visit. But he shouldn't have bothered because they both had been training and were now exhausted and in pain and they'd moved the extra futon to the living room.

Both of them eagerly waiting for their soup to be done.

Well, Naruko was eagerly waiting.

Sitting on the Futon, with her back propped up against the couch, while Sasuke was dozing on the couch.

'He really can't sleep without you, huh?' Iruka asked after a while.

Naruko stared at Sasuke and carefully brushed his hair out of his face. 'Doesn't seem like it.' She grumbled. 'I'm going to feel bad for him, if he isn't able to pull off his training regimen, just because you and the Sandaime have suddenly become really interested in our living situation.' She said staring at the older man.

'You know when all of this attention would have been really nice and not weirdly uncomfortable?' She asked. 'When I was six years old and they gave me this apartment with barely anything in it.'

She stared at the pot on the stove, before she remembered who she was talking to.

'Sorry Iruka, this isn't about you. It's more about the Sandaime. You didn't even know me back then. It's not your problem, really.' She said tiredly.

Iruka stared at the young woman in front of him and realized that she was rightfully pissed and wasn't that the worst? She had been alone from the start and then she had managed to slowly build a home for herself and her friend and the whole time nobody had cared and now that they were almost of age it was suddenly important enough for an ANBU to guard her?

For her teacher to impose on her every other night?

He only had himself to blame. If he hadn't thought like an older brother that day, he wouldn't have put them both in this situation.

It was clear as day, that they were very careful with each other.

Iruka honestly doubted that the two of them did much more than kiss.

Worst of all, Sasuke had a serious problem. He couldn't sleep. This wasn't just some game to him. He truly couldn't find peace.

He stared at the two of them and nodded to himself. 'I'll talk to the Sandaime about my chaperoning. You are right, we have been behaving ridiculous.' He nodded towards the both of them. Even though Sasuke was still out cold.

Then he stopped. 'Just in case— If you do want to you know, become sexually active—' He groaned, 'You know all about safe sex, right?' He finally asked exceedingly uncomfortable.

Naruko stared at her teacher. 'I'm learning all about the theory of seduction in my kunoichi classes. We've already had the protection class, but they decided I wouldn't be suited for seduction anyway, because the Kyuubi burns through any form of birth control pill the same way he does with poisons. Ryosuke is currently looking into a shot for me, for long term missions. The Kunoichi classes have also been very thorough about every other form of birth control.' Naruko finally said when the timer rang.

'You know it took us years to tell each other that we liked us. I don't think anyone has to worry about us doing anything anytime soon.' She admitted, while steering the soup.

Iruka nodded. 'I'll talk with the Hokage about my chaperoning and Naruko?'

She hummed.

'Tomorrow I'll treat you two to Ichiraku, anything you want.' He said smiling. Naruko nodded her thanks and smiled back.

'Thank you Iruka!' She called out to him as he walked away.

Sasuke blinked his eyes open when she put a bowl of tomato soup in front of him.

'Thanks.' He mumbled.

Changes

Chapter Notes

Edited: 22th October 2019



They were keeping up their little arrangement for another month.

Sasuke's sleeping situation changed again, when he realized that he could just flip his schedule.

Which translated to training at night and sleeping during the day at Naruko's. He felt a little ridiculous for obviously not being able to handle being alone anymore, but he also learned something important, through all of this.

For as long as he'd known Naruko, he'd never been lonely.

After the first month was up, he acknowledged that he needed to stop trying to break into Naruko's apartment, at night.

He had been forced to see reason after his third visit with the Sandaime, who put extra emphasis on the fact that if he was caught one more time he'd get an official reprimand over it.

They'd gotten used to their new rhythm anyway.

He slept when he wasn't at the academy and Naruko napped with him for an hour after she trained, then they eat together.

It sucked because he needed to sleep his time with her away, but if he didn't get some sleep he couldn't manage his training.

Besides, napping was glorious. Mostly because they did that in the same bed, wanting to feel the closeness and the intimacy.

When he struggled to wake up, Naruko threaded her fingers through his hair and talked to him.

‘Maybe you should call your therapist again? I mean we still have half a year to go and your sleeping schedule is really messed up.’ She mumbled. ‘Maybe she has an idea on how to make this easier for you in the meantime.’

Sasuke felt his left eye twitch an annoyance. ‘Hn.’ Immediately fed up, so Naruko was left with no other choice but to start a tickle war.

Their friends saw the change in them, too, but when they asked what was up, the two of them kind of ignored the issue, until they realized they weren't going to drop it. Which was when Sasuke just said, that he was trying a new training regimen for developing the Sharingan, where one important factor was sleep deprivation.

The clan kids nodded in understanding, seems like everyone had their own weird clan traditions.

Their group of friends hadn't even blinked when Naruko and him had shown up to their meeting place holding hands.

It looked like this was such a natural progression for everyone that no one really deemed it noteworthy, which they were kind of relieved about. Especially with all the attention they were getting from almost everyone else about it.

X

Sakura started stalking him again and she was doing it much more efficiently than she had ever managed to, before. The girl had been nothing short of devastated, when Ino had told her that Sasuke was in a relationship.

But she picked herself back up and apparently decided she wasn't going to lose.

Sasuke groaned when he thought about the speech, she had given him.

The thing was, neither she and nor the other girls in class would ever understand him, the way he needed to be understood.

He knew that it wasn't her fault that he didn't have any tolerance for her.

He had to go through some intense adult experiences, before he was even ten years old and it made it incredibly hard for him to relate to teens his age, in general.

But he felt completely detached from them, when they were operating on the level of immaturity and ignorance that his fan girls were on.

Naruko got that. She knew what they had, understood what he wanted from life. He got her, too. Most of the time.

Thankfully, most of them started to redirect their attention, after he kissed Naruko, but that Sakura seemed hell bent on ignoring that or maybe she just didn't get it.

He could decline her invitations, make her lose his trail, make out with Naruko somewhere semi-public, aware of the fact that she'd probably see them and the girl just ignored it.

In the end it was an easy decision to make.

He couldn't sleep, he had a stalker, he was lying to his friends aboutt why he was feeling like shit and his training suffered from it.

So, he called his therapist again.

The woman sat relaxed in her chair in front of him and mustered him as he talked her through what had happened in the last month, alone.

'They made you move out?' She asked, sounding neutral.

'Yes.'

'Because you were cohabitating with your girlfriend.'

'Yes.'

'But nothing happened yet.'

'We lived together for almost five years and we didn't do anything in that time. We're just thirteen.' He replied somewhat annoyed.

His therapist nodded, thoughtfully, before she asked. 'What did you do to make your new place feel like a home?'

Sasuke groaned. 'Nothing. Naruko made copies of all the pictures we have in our apartment and taped them to the walls, she also bought a few plants and my favorite coffee and stuff. So that the place would smell a bit like ours.'

His therapist blinked. 'That was a very good idea of her. Did it help any?'

Sasuke stared at her. Deadpan.

'Right, sorry.' She said, smiling sheepishly, as she tapped her pen against her journal.

'But you never had trouble sleeping in your old apartment, right? Even when she isn't there?' She finally asked.

'That place makes me feel safe.' He said, shrugging. He felt honestly sad just thinking about not having it anymore. But he tried to pull back from that. Only a little less than half a year more to go. He could do that.

When his therapist didn't say anything, he elaborated.

'Our chakra signatures are all over it, because we train our control there, all the time. It smells like us, like our laundry detergent and the tea and the plants and the spices we use. It's lived in. Nothing there is perfect. The walls have cracks, but we put pictures over them or painted them golden.'

He smiled at that memory. It used to be done to table ware. Fixing cracks by filling them in with a bit of gold, to make them their own art piece. Make them special. When he first read that, he'd been the one to buy the golden paint. It was his first real contribution. His first claim on the place. Naruko had smiled the entire time, they'd painted them.

He shook his head, dejectedly. 'We just made that place our own and it can be seen in everything.' He mumbled almost ashamed for having been so open. But he realized that he needed help. He wanted to get stronger and not being able to sleep would kill his training in the long run.

She nodded. 'It can be scary when you lose your home and the prospect of coming back is so far away. Do you think you'll have trouble with missions?'

He glanced up. 'No. I think I'll handle missions differently.' He said confidently.

'Why is that?'

He blushed. 'First of all, I'll still have my home, then. My place to return to, where I know I'll be fine. Second of all, I know Naruko and I will be on the same team, so I think we'll rarely be too long apart.'

She blinked at him and laughed. 'How would you know?'

'The dead last always gets paired up with the two best students in the academy. We are the best.'

‘Hmm. Okay. I think it’s great that you have a home that makes you feel safe but being this dependent on a person or a place is not good. Especially not in our occupation. So, I’m going to recommend you eat, cook, sleep, train— whatever for a week at your new place. You may see Naruko outside of the academy for an hour each day, during the week but other than that, it’s all about you. Got it?’

He stared at her before he heaved a sigh as she smiled, encouragingly at him.

‘I’ll try.’ He finally said, already knowing that the next week would be utter shit.

‘Now tell me about your stalker?’ She said somewhat concerned.

After he was done recounting the events, his therapist stared at him in disbelief.

‘That seems a little intense for a crush.’ She finally said.

‘I know.’

‘How is Naruko handling it?’

‘She ignores her completely. Mostly because everything the girl says to her is berating or insulting. It’s not like being openly hated is new for her.’ He shrugged.

And his therapist nodded. The girl was the Jinchuuriki and the villagers were still ignorant.

‘But you can’t ignore it?’

‘No, I can, and I do, usually. But at the moment it’s a just a lot. Everything’s seems a bit more extreme. Especially, since it feels like I have no control over a lot of what’s been happening in my life. It didn’t help that she refused to back off after I told her that I didn’t feel the same way about her and want to be left alone.’

She fumbled with her pen. ‘This sounds like a little more than a crush. It’s not uncommon in teens to idolize their crushes, but she should have seen reason, by now. Especially, after you told her in person that you didn’t want her attention. I think the girl needs a little more adult supervision in her life. Do you mind if I talk about this with her parents?’

Sasuke blinked. ‘You would do that?’

She nodded. ‘I wouldn’t say that I am your therapist, of course. I’d pose as... who would know about this?’

‘Everyone at school.’

‘Okay, then I’m a concerned staff member.’ She nodded.

He stared at her. ‘That would be really helpful.’

‘Hmm. I’ll have to talk to Iruka about it. Maybe he’ll come with.’ She nodded. ‘Might give me more credibility that way.’

X

The next week was going incredibly shitty. He hated cooking alone, working out and doing homework alone and just being alone, he guessed. So, he invited their friends over to his place.

The guys were really surprised, but they came either way. Shikamaru was currently laid out on his carpet next to the large windows and watched the sky, Kiba stared at the different photos that were taped all over the apartment and seemed to be happy and surprised to find himself in some of them. Chouji helped him get snacks and drinks for everyone.

They ended up playing ninja poker and talking about training.

‘I’m increasing my leg weights again.’ Sasuke said, somewhat proud.

‘You’re still training with that weird guy in the tight green thing?’ Kiba asked curiously and somewhat disturbed by the memory of the leotard. Sasuke couldn’t blame him.

‘He is intense, and his teacher is worse, but they are both incredibly strong taijutsu experts and training with them really helps me.’

Shikamaru stared at him. ‘Maito Gai is the green beast of Konoha, he is said to be one of our top ten strongest fighters.’ He shared.

Sasuke blinked. ‘I didn’t know that.’

‘The guy’s taijutsu style is insane and Rock Lee is his first apprentice.’

Sasuke furrowed his brows. ‘That doesn’t seem right. Gai is always excited if someone wants to train with them, you just have to complete the punishment successfully.’

‘Punishment?’ Kiba asked, sounding concerned.

Sasuke nodded. ‘Run around Konoha on your hands, that kind of stuff. He doesn’t mind if you take longer than you said to complete it, but he needs to see that you have the will to follow through.’ He shrugged, while his friends stared at him in varying degrees of surprise.

‘Does Naruko do that too?’ Chouji finally asked.

Sasuke shook his head. ‘She’s training with Ryosuke. Volunteering at the hospital. Her medic Jutsu is getting really good and she trains her taijutsu with me.’ He felt somewhat proud that she trusted him with teaching her again, especially after the chakra control debacle.

‘I’ve been meaning to ask, why isn’t she here?’ Shikamaru finally said.

Sasuke stared at his cards for a moment. ‘What do you mean?’ He deflected.

Shikamaru shrugged. 'I was under the impression that you guys live together.' He finally said, while everyone stared at Sasuke in varying degrees of surprise.

Sasuke watched his friend, evaluating if he could share this with them. 'This doesn't leave this room, okay?'

The boys nodded.

Kiba stared at him for a second. 'I'd never tell on you or Naruko, you guys are pack.'

Chouji seemed to agree and Shikamaru nodded. 'I've known for years and told no one.' He shrugged as Sasuke tried to get his thoughts in order.

'So, we lived together for the past five years, but Iruka found out about it and was afraid we were doing stuff that wasn't appropriate, which we weren't.'

He paused for a moment, annoyed that it all came down to something so stupid, but also to make sure everyone understood that they hadn't been doing that.

'The Hokage is somewhat of a parental figure to Naruko, so when he found out about it, he got really pissed and I had to move out. Couldn't sleep for a while after that, because we lived together since the massacre.' He admitted.

Shikamaru stared at him. 'You're trying to minimize contact, so that you can get used to the change?'

Sasuke nodded. 'Been struggling with this for like two months.' He mumbled.

'Uchiha sleep deprivation training my foot.' Kiba laughed.

Sasuke snorted. 'You totally believed that one.' He grunted.

'I did.' Chouji laughed.

'So, how's Naruko doing?' Shikamaru asked.

Sasuke grimaced. 'Annoyingly well. But she helps any way she can.' He finally admitted which made the other boys laugh.

'Hey, let's meet up again here, tomorrow?' Kiba said when it was time to say goodbye.

'Yes.' Shikamaru agreed.

'Let's do it.' Chouji smiled at Sasuke.

Sasuke stared at his friends in surprise.

His life was good.

X

After a week of minimizing contact with Naruko he slept through his first night at the new place.

When he told her about it, they celebrated by cooking his favorite dish at his place and talked about everything that they had wanted to tell each other for the past week but couldn't. The time they had spent together was so limited that a lot of stuff had been put on the backburner.

It was fun and felt overwhelmingly right to have Naruko with him again. He was sad when she left early, but they didn't want to ruin the progress he'd just made.

He met his therapist again that week and told her what was going on. She had smiled and said that she was proud of the two of them. She also reported how her visit with Sakura's family went.

'Her parents had no idea what she was doing, and they weren't impressed with what Iruka and I told them. Sakura was very upset and didn't understand why what she did was wrong, but I think her mother will help her with this.'

She paused for a moment.

'Iruka, is really protective of you, did you know that?' She asked him, imploringly.

Sasuke frowned. 'No. He seems more like Naruko's older brother to me, protective of her and a bit mad of me. I don't think he cares too much about what's going on with me, to be honest.'

'I think he would disagree with that. He told me, to tell you, that you can always come to him with problems and that he'll do his best to help you. He'll tell you in person, too, but he thought it would make more of an impact coming from me.' She smiled encouragingly.

'I don't know about you, but I think that's really nice of him. You should have seen how he disillusioned Sakura. The girl is now very aware of the fact that her affections are unwanted.'

Sasuke stared at her for a moment, before he blushed.

'I'll thank him later.'

'You do that.' His therapist nodded, before she added, sincerely. 'I'm glad I was able to help. Call me anytime something like this comes up again!'

Sasuke knew he had people who genuinely cared for him.

Had always been aware, but with the way they all helped and supported him lately, he just couldn't help but feel like he was lucky.

He didn't want to imagine where he would be, if Naruko hadn't protected him from Itachi, if she hadn't waited him out at the hospital and if she hadn't given him her friendship.

How much of a support pillar she'd been to him and he realized that instead of encouraging his dependence on her, she'd encouraged him to rebuild his own pillars instead.

In the first year after the massacre she'd felt like his lifeline. His connection to everything else. Now, he recognized that that wasn't true anymore and that the fact that it no longer held true wasn't a bad thing.

It just meant that he had friends and adults in his life that were there for him and wanted to help.

Without her he wouldn't have let them in, wouldn't have given them the chance to prove themselves, wouldn't have heard them.

He knew this.

He'd probably have ended up as an avenger, he thought tiredly, as he walked to the academy. It wasn't like he didn't want to kill his brother. It just wasn't his sole reason for wanting to get stronger. He trained to be able to protect himself and the people he loved. Make it so, that he would never have to feel so weak ever again.

In moments like this, he also realized how much they'd both grown.

Meeting Iruka was interesting. They were both not great at being open with each other, but they tried. The older man repeated again that Sasuke could come and talk to him if he needed to and Sasuke thanked him for his help.

They ended up at his new apartment and just talked for a bit. Sasuke explained that he was doing better and as the night went on the topic of conversation got deeper and deeper.

Iruka told him how he neither slept well, nor felt like himself, after the war ended and that he needed a bit of time to adjust to that, as well.

Sasuke shared his thoughts on how Naruko and him were growing, without growing apart with Iruka and watched him laugh, that laugh that showed how much he didn't understand how they managed to have what they have with each other.

They had a surprisingly pleasant evening.

After another two weeks of tentative closeness.

Sasuke and Naruko were back to where they started, just with the added bonus of him being able to sleep at his apartment.

They hung out, trained together, cooked together, sometimes at his apartment, sometimes at hers, they'd even started chakra training exercises together, which was equivalent to Naruko declaring her eternal love for him.

She painted his fingernails black, he played with her long blonde strands while she read.

They made out a ton and they napped together after training.

They found a balance and it had only taken them four months.

But they still worked. He kept her favorite yoghurt on hand, at all times, even though he disliked it and she made sure to always have something with tomatoes prepared.

They were, in Shikamaru's words 'disgustingly happy' and the Genin exams weren't that far away.

'Hnn.' Naruko mumbled, when Sasuke slightly shook her shoulder, to wake her up.

They'd napped together on his bed.

'You'll have to go home soon.' He mumbled.

'I will.' She grumbled and pressed herself flush against Sasuke. She was still sleep warm and relaxed, so he just stroked her hair and her upper back and talked to her until she stopped dozing off.

After a while she said.

'I love you.'

And he smiled and said 'Hn.'

She snorted. 'You're the worst.'

'Really?' He asked, smiling against the top of her head.

'Yeah. You should be over the moon with happiness. Love is a big deal, ya know?' She mumbled into his chest, which had started to shake with his quiet laughter.

'I confessed, three months ago, I know.' He finally said, before grinning at her playfully. 'What would be an appropriate reaction?'

‘I think ‘I love Naruko Uzumaki’ in bright colorful letters on the Hokage monument, is the least you could do.’ She muttered, giggling, while he flicked her forehead.

‘I knew it.’ He whispered conspiratorially. ‘You want the Hokage to kill me.’

Naruko snorted. ‘If I wanted that, I could just go up to him and lie about the whole sex thing.’

He groaned, before he admitted ‘Yeah, that would do it.’

They laughed and before they parted ways, Naruko kissed him goodbye.

The kiss was sweet and gentle, and he knew he’d get in trouble, but damnit, she deserved it.

A week later, Sasuke didn’t show up to class, which made Naruko slightly nervous. It wasn’t like Sasuke to miss out on class.

An hour into their class, they could all hear the ruckus outside. Iruka stared outside in shock.

‘That damned Uchiha.’ He grumbled, before turning bright red.

The rest of the class looked outside, to see the defaced Hokage monument. Many of them turned red or sputtered, too and the murmurs started immediately.

‘No way.’

‘He seriously did that?’

‘For her?’

‘That’s so romantic.’

‘She’s way lucky.’

‘Well, that’s excessive.’

They were right to be shocked, because right there, on the monument, for the world to see, in bright colorful letters that could be read even from the academy, was declared, ‘I love you, Naruko Uzumaki!’. It had to be one of the most meticulously created graffito ever. She stared at it in shock, before she turned bright red and started laughing.

Unbelievable, the snooty Uchiha she had known for years had actually done it.

It had been a joke on her part.

Something so ridiculous, she was sure he wouldn’t do it.

She laughed, bright and happy and then she hopped right out of the classroom window and left.

Upon further inspection she could see a dark blue and a bright green blur evade ANBU through Konoha.

So, he had enlisted the help of Rock Lee, for this youthful endeavor. She'd meet him at the Hokage tower later, she decided.

But first she needed to take a picture of this amazingness. This was one for the books, she decided.

She felt giddy with happiness and love, when she picked him up from the tower later.

The punishment had been determined by the Hokage, because Gai couldn't stop crying about the flames of youth and the passion of young love.

In the end they only had to clean the thing up again, no reprimand, no nothing.

She knew the adults were kind of lenient about the whole thing because it was so freaking cute.

She smiled and tackled Sasuke in a hug, the moment he got out of the tower.

The boy wasn't even blushing, he just smiled cockily at her.

Damnit, he had no business being so cool, when she looked like a freaking tomato. He literally had just proven that he was a huge dork. But he was her dork.

'So, I take it that was an appropriate reaction?' He asked, when she pulled away. Smiling brightly at her, looking absolutely ridiculous. Color splatters everywhere, his hair had a bright red tinge to it and Naruko loved it.

She leaned into him again to kiss him, when they finally broke apart, she smiled again and said. 'I can't believe you did that.'

He laughed quietly. 'You thought I was too uppity to ever do something like this, didn't you?'

Naruko blushed prettily again. 'You have no business calling my boyfriend uppity, Mister. He just defaced the Hokage monument for me.'

He snorted.

Needless to say, when Sasuke got home from cleaning the mess up with Lee, that didn't take long at all, since they made it into a competition, they made out a lot.

The next day at the academy, brought one significant change.

There were no fan girls any more. Even the last ones, had realized that they didn't stand a chance.

Not that that was why he'd done it, but he couldn't help but think that it was a nice bonus.

Walking through the streets without his tail of stalkers, completing classwork or answering a question without the extra attention, living life without the constant squeals and screeches was amazing.

It felt like he'd been haunted all his life on some level and now, that he wasn't watched constantly he just relaxed.

Another change that this whole thing had brought about, was that people didn't regard him as just 'the last Uchiha anymore'. He was now 'the guy that defaced the Hokage monument to tell his girlfriend that he loved her' or 'that vandal' or 'that damned Uchiha'.

The last one was mostly used by the man in Naruko's life.

But all in all, he was happy about the changes, he was basically an urban legend now and not just because of his past, but because of something he'd done.

The downside to this was that he'd been given the shovel talk more times and in a lot of different variations, than he would have guessed. It was nice to know that so many people were looking out for Naruko, but it also annoyed him a little that they thought he would harm her.

The ones from Kiba, Iruka and Teuchi, hadn't been surprising, the unnecessary long debriefing from the Hokage after the Monument was cleaned up and Lee had already been sent home, was its own warning.

That the ANBU with the dog masked showed up at his door and just looked at him for a minute before he disappeared again was unexpected.

However, the one he could truly have done without was Konohamaru's.

The kid adored Naruko dearly.

The two of them had met at the hospital, when Konohamaru had come in with a few scratches from training and asked Naruko to heal him.

He'd followed her around for a while after that, and she tolerated that, because she thought he was kind of cute, with his big dream and his exuberant way.

She also knew what it was like to live in the shadow of something.

In true Naruko fashion, the only thing that bothered her about the whole ordeal was how bad Konohamaru was at hiding.

The boy wanted to be a ninja and his idea of camouflage was so ridiculous that she did the only logical thing.

She began teaching him better ways to stalk, which looking back was hilariously messed up, but that had been that.

The kid was now treating her like his long-lost, dearly missed older sister.

So, when he had come up to him, with a snot nosed boy and a little girl and threatened him, Sasuke had been struggling to contain the annoyed eyebrow twitch from his childhood.

Was this his life now?

He stared at the snot nosed kid, somehow particularly insulted by his presence. They had threatened him.

He'd be in trouble if he hurt Naruko, the midget had proclaimed.

Sasuke tried to gather his bearings and stared at Konohamaru for a moment, thinking about intimidating the brat, but he only came up with amusement.

All three were dressed in some variation of Naruko's ninja outfit. The girl wore a skirt and a green top like Naruko and had her nails painted red. The boys wore long black pants and the same green top and had their nails painted black, like him.

Sighing, he did his best to take him seriously and earnestly nodded. Konohamaru seemed to be appeased by that and after that particularly weird confrontation everything slowly returned to business as usual.

The only other thing that really changed, was that Rock Lee was now his friend.

Yes, friend.

He had taken some time to get used to the idea of having a friend in a bright green skin-tight leotard. But he had to face reality and the guy wasn't just his trainings partner anymore.

They had defaced the Hokage monument for his girlfriend together. He had asked him for help and the other man had just agreed.

Not even questioning why.

That was friendship and he knew it.

So, that was how Rock Lee became a regular at his apartment.

He was also an orphan and would often eat with him and Naruko, especially after training.

'Sasuke!' Lee called, having just landed on the balcony of Sasuke's apartment, when Naruko opened the glass door and smiled. Naruko liked the other guy for his weirdness and not despite of it, which Sasuke would never understand, but then again, neither she nor him were exactly normal, either.

‘Hey Lee! We just came back, so Sasuke’s still in the shower! Come in.’ She gestured for him to come through and he did, smiling brightly.

‘I’ve brought food.’ He laughed at her over the moon happy expression.

‘Thank god, we would have had to go shopping if you didn’t.’ She groaned happily, snatching the bag out of his hand.

‘So, what are we making?’ She asked him as she carried the bag to the kitchen.

‘Yakisoba.’

‘Yum!’ She exclaimed, while Lee smiled and moved to the cupboards, he had become familiar with these past few weeks, getting out a pot and a frying pan, while Naruko started washing vegetables.

‘Gai sensei said I’d be ready to open the third Gate soon.’ He said thoughtfully.

‘No way.’ She murmured. ‘That’s amazing, Lee!’ The strain is often ridiculously hard on the body, though.’ She murmured, thinking about it for a second.

‘Should I come by your next practice? I could heal you up right away. The faster that is being treated the less it will mess with your body.’ She explained, while frying up the vegetables and the meat.

Lee only stared at her for a moment.

‘Yosh! I will show you my youthful technique at our next practice. You’re too good, Naruko!’

She snorted. ‘The things I do for Yakisoba.’ She said teasingly, while Lee laughed.

‘Next time, I’ll bring Ramen, see what that gets me!’ he said conspiratorially as they went about preparing the meal.

‘I’d probably get Konohamaru and the gang to prank Neiji for that. Make them tail him for a week or so.’

Lee had an evil glint in his eyes as he thought about that.

Sasuke stared at them both with the same evil glint in his eyes, having listened to the last part of their conversation.

‘I’m getting Ramen tomorrow.’ He said, locking eyes with Lee. ‘The Hyuuga is such an arrogant idiot, he deserves it.’

Sasuke would never forget the day he realized that he was well adjusted.

Seriously well adjusted.

For him that particular revelation came when he went shopping with Naruko. They were searching for a birthday present for Kiba. The Inuzuka had just randomly shown up on the morning of Sasuke's thirteenth birthday, with the rest of their friends in tow and a huge cake in his arms and told them they'd celebrate birthdays with their friends, now.

If creating new traditions wasn't a sign of being well adjusted, Sasuke didn't know what was.

At least that was what he thought while he stared down the aisle of ninja dog toys and watched Naruko contemplate if they should get two smaller ones or one big one.

Naruko had been hesitant to celebrate her birthday with their friends as well, but after the continuous nagging of Kiba and Lee had worn her down, she'd told them she'd do it.

When they asked Sasuke, why she was being so difficult about it, he had explained, that it was because her parents had died that day, so she didn't like making a huge deal out of it.

Needless to say, that their efforts to include her into their new tradition, doubled after that.

He still remembered her reaction, when they'd done it for her.

'I can't believe they did that.' Naruko mumbled, in awe of the small package she'd just opened.

'They know how important these memories are to you. So, they've been keeping track.' Sasuke shrugged.

'Yeah I Guess.' Naruko mumbled.

She'd been gifted pictures. So many of them, some were sneakily taken, for example the ones of her training Konohamaru and the gang.

'I love them.' Flipping through the photo album, she smiled.

'Kiba is such a sap deep down, isn't he?'

'Hn.'

'Oh, come on Sasuke, I know you enjoy his company.'

'I guess.'

'Come of it.'

‘Kiba is a good friend.’ Sasuke finally admitted.

‘I’ll tell him you said that.’ Naruko smiled foxy while she snapped the album shut.

Sasuke’s eyes widened. ‘Don’t you dare.’ He grunted.

‘What are you going to do about it?’ She asked and squeaked, when Sasuke tickled her sides.

It was on.

X

When the much anticipated Genin exams finally rolled around, they were beyond excited.

They were only the third course of students that had been going through the new enrollment process.

Enrolled at age six and Genin at age fourteen, was the new recommendation, to help keep the children safe and make sure that their psychological development, was up to par with what was expected of them.

Konoha didn’t want another Itachi.

The young boy would have been able to see through the ruse, when he’d just been a little older, more mature, less jaded from what he’d done already.

If he had been the boy would have realized that Danzo and the council hadn’t consulted the Hokage before they ‘relayed’ his order.

The Sandaime was so sure of it, that he’d immediately ordered Inoichi and Shikaku to work on another school system.

Easily manipulated Shinobi were the last thing the Sandaime wanted. So, the new curriculum was born.

The academy kids were expected to reach the Chunin and later Jounin state much easier and faster than before.

The first course, under the new curriculum, had made Chunin within the same year and Jounin two years later, at least the ones that didn’t specialize.

But the council had to agree. Those were good numbers.

Jounin rank at sixteen was a great accomplishment. The sad thing was, that the survival rates also rose drastically.

Reflecting about how many deaths could have been prevented if he'd just taken action sooner, wasn't something Sarutobi liked to do.

Different times, he thought, often.

Not all that long ago, it was believed that the younger the children completed the basics, the further they'd go in life.

Sadly, reality had proven these assumptions wrong. In the end these Shinobi were the ones that died far earlier than their peers and that became emotionally unstable a lot faster. Child prodigies weren't encouraged anymore.

Needless to say, the age restriction had pissed off a lot of clans, but once they knew what the new system did for their kids, they backed off.

However, he hadn't only changed the system. He'd also included chakra control and basic elemental Jutsu into the later courses. That stuff wasn't difficult to teach. There was no reason for Jounin to do it.

In general, the whole thing only had one huge consequence. It made the Genin test a hell of a lot harder. Not anyone deserved to be one and those that sailed through with book smarts alone were quickly weeded out or encouraged to specialize otherwise.

Naruko and Sasuke had been nervous about the test all god damn day. Over were the times where you'd perform three Jutsu and passed a written test to be Genin.

No, they did the whole thing in a tournament style now.

You'd fought without lethal weapons against your peers. Only a third would advance to Genin.

That had been true since forever, however the Hokage had additionally prohibited Jounin from subjectively deciding who passes. They were still allowed to test if the Genin met their requirements, but if they ended up not meeting them, they were just assigned to another Jounin.

This was a way to prevent favoritism.

Of course, Naruko, Sasuke and their friends, pulled through and finished the whole thing with flying colors.

Well, Shikamaru cut it really close, but that was just the way he was. Work smarter, not harder, and all that.

Their first act as newly minted Genin was to move Sasuke back in.

Well they had to meet up with the Hokage first.

On assignment day. At freaking five o'clock in the morning, because the alternative had been to wait another month until the Hokage had another time slot for them.

'He seriously thinks that would deter us, doesn't he?' Naruko grumbled, half asleep on her feet while they made their way to the Hokage tower.

'He's playing hard ball with us.' Sasuke nodded tiredly.

'So stupid.' Naruko groaned. 'Hn.' Sasuke agreed.

Naruko hadn't even bothered to put on her Kunoichi outfit.

She wore her tight kunoichi leggings, a tank top and an oversized hoodie that always slid down and left one of her shoulders bare. Her braid was slightly messy, and she had opted for civilian sneakers instead of shinobi sandals.

Sasuke wore somewhat fitted sweatpants and a loose fitting shirt with his Shinobi sandals and he hadn't bothered with his hair at all, which left his duck-butt-hairstyle slightly mussed.

When they arrived the Hokage looked at them both and saw how happy the two were. They knew what this was about and even though they were dead tired on their feet, they were still looking happy enough.

He inwardly groaned. 'Which apartment do you want to keep?' He finally asked, conceding.

Of course, they had made Genin, he thought bitterly. How could they not?

Minato might hate him for it, but he wouldn't sabotage Naruko's happiness over some misguided sense of duty.

Trying to keep the Uchiha away from the girl, was absolutely useless.

Even though he knew logically that the Uchiha wasn't a raging pervert, he still felt uncomfortable with the situation. But this was what it meant to be a Genin, what it meant to be an orphan in their society. Autonomy.

Minato would have to forgive him or take it up with Iruka. That one had abandoned the ship not even a week in. Why he didn't know, but the enraged young teacher had made it very clear that he wouldn't chaperone the two teens.

Naruko stared at him for a moment. 'Mine?'

Sasuke nodded. 'I don't have a bathtub.'

Naruko nodded. 'Right and I have the better view. Even though yours is in a better condition over all.'

He shook his head. 'Doesn't matter, yours makes more sense.'

She snorted. 'Because of the bathtub?'

He looked annoyed at her and then turned to the Hokage. 'I'll be out of the apartment in an hour.' He said and smiled.

'I bet, I can get Lee to stop his morning run and help out.'

Naruko smiled at him and nodded. 'We could all have breakfast together.'

Sasuke smiled. 'I'll go get him.' And he was out the window.

The Hokage stared at the young couple before him, before he smiled.

'Are you happy Naruko?' He asked.

She looked at him in surprise. 'Yeah, I am.' She smiled.

He nodded. 'That's good.'

X

Suffice to say moving back was a quick affair. He fit into Naruto's apartment as if he'd never left. Everything went back where it had been, they taped a few additional pictures to her hallway wall and the wall in the bedroom, he put his clothes back into his drawers and his toiletries back in the bathroom.

His plants also found a new home here. On windowsills and on top of the fridge.

He smiled.

'That was quick!' Naruko said, slightly red-faced and sporting a spaghetti top, because the hoodie had been too warm.

'Yosh! Your passion inspired me to work even harder.' Lee exclaimed, sitting back on their couch and relaxing.

Sasuke stood in the kitchen and made coffee, stirred the miso soup, checked on the rice and grilled Salmon.

He felt incredibly thankful that it all worked out so freaking quickly, that he made breakfast by himself, while Naruko and Lee were laid out on the couch and half asleep.

The two of them had run back and forth between the apartments and brought Sasuke everything while he'd placed the stuff where it belonged.

‘Lee?’

‘Hmm?’ Lee murmured, looking down on the blond head that had fallen tiredly on top of Lee’s shoulder. ‘You’re incredibly fast.’

‘Not wearing weights this week.’ He mumbled.

‘A whole week?’

‘Hmm. Have to get used to it like that.’

‘Damn. You’re really strong you know that, right?’

He stared at her for a moment. ‘I still have ways to go.’

She was half asleep as she mumbled. ‘We all do. Doesn’t make what you achieve along the way any less impressive.’

He laughed, while Sasuke plated up. Lee slowly stood up and let Naruko take over the couch, so she could continue sleeping.

‘I’m putting her breakfast in the fridge.’ Sasuke said.

‘Better let her get some rest now.’

Lee nodded.

Sasuke mustered him for a few moments. ‘She’s right, you know?’

Lee blushed and nodded. Without Gai he didn’t really do much of the Genjutsu sunrise thing which Sasuke was somewhat thankful for.

As they ate, they discussed their new training regimen.

It was really nice. Sasuke thought and wondered when he would stop being surprised by how good his life had turned out to be.

‘So, how did you do it?’ Lee asked when they were going back to the training field. They still had two hours before the academy let in. Well he had two hours, Lee had the whole day to train with his Jounin teacher.

‘What?’ Sasuke asked as he pushed himself through another set of pull-ups.

‘Get a girl like that?’ Lee asked and watched him carefully.

Sasuke stared at him for a moment. He knew that Lee respected Naruko a lot and that he didn’t mean it in a weird way, but he still didn’t know how to answer that. ‘I have no idea how to answer that.’

Lee groaned. ‘How did you meet?’

‘When we were five years old. Start of the academy.’

‘And?’

‘Her teacher was purposefully showing her the Katas wrong. I told my mom, she told the Hokage and after that I helped her catch up.’

He had to admit that looking back, he had no idea what the turning point had been in their relationship. When did they go from acquaintances to friends? Were they ever not friends? He’d known her for too long. He couldn’t tell anymore.

‘Okay. So, you were friends first?’ Lee asked.

‘Yeah. She was my best friend for years.’ I may have saved her initially from the teachers, but then she saved him, not only from his brother, but also from loneliness. He added silently.

‘Hmm.’ Lee thought out loud. ‘So, I shouldn’t try to go out with someone immediately, I should try to befriend them instead?’

Sasuke shrugged. ‘I think that’s how it worked for us. Maybe you’re already friends with a girl, that you could fall in love with?’

‘I’ll think about it.’ Lee answered thoughtfully.

X

They were ridiculously nervous about their team placement, so when they finally went to the Academy, they were not surprised at all, to see that everyone else was in a similar state. Well, with the exception of Ino, Shikamaru and Chouji. They already had a team name and everything.

‘The oppressive silence in here feels great.’ Naruko mumbled next to him.

He smiled at her. ‘It will all work out.’

She gave him the look. The one that was fond but also exasperated. Somewhat along the lines of You don’t say? and Don’t jinx it!

He grunted and stared at Iruka when the young teacher came into the classroom, willing him to give him some kind of hint, but the teacher just grinned sadistically.

Worst case scenario was that they were both on a team with Sakura. The girl had been holding back ever since she had been talked to, but she still hated Naruko with a passion and he could also still feel her lingering looks on him.

He didn’t get it, at all. How did one invest so much time and effort into getting the attention

of someone that was not interested in them at all? Not to mention the fact, that the girl didn't even know him.

'Team 7, Naruko Uzumaki, Kiba Inuzuka and Sasuke Uchiha under Hatake Kakashi.' Iruka proclaimed. Kiba smiled brightly at them and raised his fist in victory, while Naruko gave him a thumbs up. Thank Kami, Sasuke thought and smiled at them both tiredly. He had been tenser than he originally thought.

They were all happy. Kiba knew them, he knew how hard they trained and that they would have his back, no matter what. They could trust Kiba in kind as well.

Iruka smiled, after the whole stalking ordeal, Iruka had made sure to include the therapist's recommendation, not to put Sakura with either Naruko nor Sasuke on a team until she was older, and it seems like the Hokage had heeded her advice.

Half an hour into waiting for their new teacher, Sasuke and Kiba were playing ninja poker. Since Naruko tended to dominate at that game like nobodies' business, she just watched and coddled Akamaru.

'So, anyone know anything about Hatake Kakashi?' Kiba asked, while he glared at Sasuke over his cards.

Naruko, who laid on one of the windowsills with Akamaru on her chest and Kiba's jacket under her head as a pillow, smiled.

'He's afraid of Ryosuke, in his mid-twenties, has a reputation as the copycat ninja. Ya know?' She mumbled.

'Copycat?' Sasuke asked.

'Hmm. I've seen his personal records, so I'm going to warn you beforehand. He has a Sharingan. I heard that his former teammate gave it to him freely, though.'

Sasuke stared at her for a moment and Kiba used the distraction to manipulate his odds. 'Well, that's okay then.' Sasuke said finally.

'Might even be helpful for you.' Kiba said grinning, he had this game in the bag.

'Hmm.' He mumbled

'Naruko stop dozing off in the afternoon sun. What else do ya know?' Kiba called over his shoulder, missing Sasuke's subtly changing out his cards.

Akamaru yipped at him before snuggling back on his teammate.

'He has a reputation for always being late and reading porn in public.' She grimaced.

'Damn. The guy sounds like a total tool.' Kiba said, staring at Sasuke in anger. He knew he had done something to turn the game back to his favor.

After an hour of Naruko snoozing, Sasuke and Kiba playing ninja poker, they brought out the food.

Everybody had a bento, and even though Sasuke's and Naruko's were the same they laid

everything out for everyone to share and tried to ignore the fact that their teacher seemed to be a slacking pervert.

When Kakashi finally showed up, he was greeted with a scene, he truly wouldn't have expected. Instead of three bored Genin, his team sat on the windowsill, shared food, played ninja poker and laughed and talked to each other.

Of course, he had already heard of the pair that was his teacher's daughter and the last Uchiha.

He had spent a good month tackling the boy away from Naruko's door and windows, after all.

'Team 7?' He asked and the three looked at him and smiled. 'Yes!' They said, packing up their stuff immediately.

'You're... interesting. Come meet me at the roof!'

After the epic and useless introduction of Hatake Kakashi: 'I'm Hatake Kakashi. Things I like and things I hate? I don't feel like telling you that. My dreams for the future? Never really thought about that. As for my hobbies... I have lots of hobbies.'

It was her turn. 'Blondie, you start.' Kakashi said.

'I am Naruko Uzumaki. I like ramen, training, hanging out with my friends and learning new Jutsu. I dislike ignorant people. I have a lot of hobbies. My dream is to be able to protect everyone I care about. Ya know?' She finished with a huge smile on her face.

Kakashi stared at her for a moment. She looked so much like Kushina with her long hair and her face and eye shape, just with her father's coloring. 'Okay, heart eyes. You go next.'

Sasuke deadpanned their teacher for a whole minute, before he acknowledged that he did in fact mean him.

'I am Sasuke Uchiha. I like a lot of things. My dislikes are none of your business. I have hobbies. I'm going to restore my clan and I'm training to be strong enough to protect my precious people, too.' He finished, obviously pissed.

If you didn't want a nick name like heart eyes, you shouldn't have declared your love on the Hokage monument, Kakashi thought, amusedly.

'Okay, dog breath, your turn.'

Kiba groaned resigned. 'I am Kiba Inuzuka, I like hanging out with my friends, training and spending time with Akamaru. I dislike the nickname 'dog breath'.' Naruko snorted at that and Kiba grinned at her. 'My hobbies are exploring, learning new techniques and eating good food. My dream is to make my pack proud and basically what they said.'

Kakashi stared at the three teens in front of him and nodded. He pulled off the whole spiel about not eating and tried to stress them out with his second test, but they seemed really fucking unperturbed.

‘Is that a direct order?’ Naruko asked. Kakashi stared at her. ‘Not eating. Is that a direct order?’

‘It’s a warning.’ He said, finally. Damn, the girl was sharp.

‘That’s okay then.’ She said, ‘I’m not so afraid of throwing up, that I’ll skip out on the most important meal of the day.’ She said, smiling knowingly.

Her companions agreed.

The teacher’s eyebrow twitched. ‘I’ll see you tomorrow.’ He said through a fake smile.

Introductions

Chapter Notes

Sorry guys. I had the stomach flu and then I needed the time to catch up on some of my studying and real life stuff. The story is not completed, yet. We still have one chapter left.



They passed the second test like nobodies' business. Nobody even asked, why there only were two bells, never the less he had tried to intimidate them, but he soon recognized that they were simply too old to fall for such an obvious trick.

He didn't even have to tie anyone to that goddamn pole. They just immediately worked together and tried to get the bells that way.

Of course, he was holding back, but he wasn't holding back as much as he had expected he would.

The one thing he hadn't anticipated was that the Uchiha would awaken his Sharingan during the test.

However, the moment he threatened Naruko with a Kunai to the neck, the boys Sharingan focused on him.

‘What will you do, now? I have your teammate and it’s either the bells or—’

He wanted to see, how they would handle a hostage situation. Would they prioritize the bells over their team mate’s life? He was about to tell them his conditions, but he didn’t even get to finish his demands.

Kiba and Sasuke acted so synchronized, that he had to assume that they’d been training together for years, which they might have had.

Sasuke used the Substitute technique to switch places with Naruko. With the height difference, he was able to throw his head back and brain Kakashi with the back of his head, while Kiba secured their teacher’s kunai and Naruko kicked his legs out from under him.

Then his shadow clone popped.

‘Good job guys. That was some seriously good team work.’ He said appreciatively, while his team stared at him, battered, tired and furious.

‘Heart eyes, your coordinated substitution technique was perfectly timed. Blondie you regained your composure remarkably fast and immediately engaged. Dog breath you did great coordinating your attack with heart eyes and efficiently disarmed me. You all showed a lot of potential today. We’ll meet tomorrow same time, same place. But enough of that, let’s take the team picture, now.’

‘Wait a moment.’ Kiba ground out. ‘Typically, hostage situations are far more advanced and not something Genin handle. Why would you test us on that?’

Kakashi stared at his group.

‘I don’t plan on you three staying genin for long. In the shinobi world, those that break the written rules are deemed trash... but be that as it may... Those that would disregard their comrades so easily are even worse than trash. And those who don’t have the decency to respect the memories of their comrades are the worst.’

Kiba swallowed thickly and Naruko nodded determined while Sasuke stared at their new teacher knowingly. He lived in a shinobi village, of course a lot of people here had lost people that were special to them. His teacher was no exception to that.

After taking in his teams’ reaction, Kakashi stared intently at the lot of them. ‘You all just lack one thing to be great. Experience and that’s something I can give you. Now let’s stop moping and take some pictures.’ He said eye-smiling.

They made one, that was serious, for the Hokage and one that was goofy, for themselves. Kiba had his arm slung around Sasuke, both smiled at the camera, while Naruko was front and center, holding Akamaru and laughing brightly about the fact that Kakashi ruined Sasuke’s and Kiba’s hairstyles.

Of course, that picture went on the wall, the moment they got back.

They did the rudimentary amount of D-Ranks in five days, which set a new record.

Kakashi was now widely regarded as ‘that sadistic teacher’, who forced his beat-up team back to the mission office, no matter how much worse for the wear they looked.

It went so far, that they were stared at in pity, by the people handing out missions. But, after five days, they were done with the recommended forty D Rank missions.

That meant they could do C-Ranks now and C-Ranks meant that they’d get to leave the village, which made Naruko incredibly happy.

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Since they now had some serious cash, they celebrated with their team mate, who’d stolen a bottle of Sake from his mom, and a lot of great food.

By the end of it they all had a small buzz, anyway.

‘I’m telling you Kiba, I’m sooo happy to get out of the village.’ Naruko laughed, while Sasuke pulled her against his side smiling fondly down at her.

‘Me too. Adventures are waiting out there and we’ll kick their asses!’ Kiba exclaimed.

‘Yes!’ Naruko said. ‘Adventure ass kicking sounds great!’ She laughed.

Sasuke nodded. He was a silent drunk, well he got a little physical and cuddly, but that was that.

He kissed the top of Naruko’s head. ‘I’m really glad I’m on a team with you guys.’ Kiba said smiling at them. He had a pack, he knew that two pack members could love each other and still love the rest of the pack, without it interfering. So, the two of them cuddling didn’t bother him. He’d known that they were going to happen since he was eight and that was okay.

‘Me, too.’ Sasuke said quietly as Naruko nodded.

‘I have this feeling that we’re going to be big.’ She said deep in thought.

‘Like what?’ Kiba asked.

‘The next Sannin, maybe?’

‘We’ll be better.’ Sasuke said, determinedly.

‘Better than the Sannin?’ Kiba asked stunned, while Naruko looked at him imploringly.

‘We won’t ever betray each other.’ Sasuke said knowingly.

‘We really won’t’ Naruko agreed.

‘Pack is everything.’ Kiba agreed easily.

That was just how the Inuzuka worked. Not a lot of people were pack and in the life of an Inuzuka you didn’t continuously seek out more people to be in your pack. It was more about finding those selected few, that were mostly early childhood friends, that would stay with you through everything and at some point, they were pack. They just were. The human side recognized the finer complexities in those relationships, but the base instinct was clear about who belonged to him.

Naruko smiled happily. ‘Better than the Sannin.’ She said, thoughtfully.

They all fell asleep somewhere on the living room floor. Thankfully, they had laid out blankets and pillows, beforehand so everything ended up being okay.

The next morning, they were woken up by one very angry Tsume, that scolded the lot of them silly.

After the ordeal they spend their second rest day together, cleaning out the backyard of the Inuzuka main house, without Jutsus.

Kiba bitterly said, that this was their true last D-Rank.

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The next day they discussed their training schedule with Kakashi.

‘Heart eyes you’re training with who?’ Kakashi asked, voice slightly strained.

‘Gai and his student Lee.’ Sasuke answered.

‘Were you wearing weights, when we did the evaluation test?’ Kakashi asked, voice even more strained.

Sasuke stared at him for a second. ‘Yeah. I forgot to take them off.’

Kakashi stared at his student and sweat dropped. Gai had created another stamina monster.

‘So, can I keep doing that?’ He finally asked.

Kakashi nodded. ‘Yeah. Sure. But we’ll have to go over a few techniques. See if you can copy them with your Sharingan.’ He explained. Sasuke nodded.

‘Dog breath will continue his family training, but he’ll also learn with my familiars. I want you to be able to track a Jounin without them noticing, in six months’ time.’

He turned to the blonde. ‘You’re well rounded, but I’d like to work on your speed with you and I’d like to talk to you about a specialization.’

Naruko looked aghast at that. 'I'm a trained medic, but I'd rather not specialize any further. For now, I would love to learn more Nin Jutsu and improve my Tai Jutsu.' She elaborated.

Kakashi stared at her. 'Not what I meant, but good motivation.' He assured. 'I was thinking more along the lines of elemental Jutsu.' He elaborated

'Yes. All the way. Super. Let's do it!' Naruko immediately said, while Kakashi laughed quietly behind his mask. When the girl thought he would sideline her, she had another thing coming.

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The next few weeks, were spent doing one C-Rank mission after another. They ran border patrols, brought supplies to villages that had suffered from a storm, escorted merchants back and forth between the villages and they finished the most anticipated mission, yet: They picked up an important political figure, the daimyo's son, from his home in the capitol.

That one had been a bit of a struggle for everyone and it wasn't because of the bandits, that they had to kill. Nor was it because of the hours they spent walking at an excruciatingly slow pace, in an effort not to discomfort their client.

No, the problem was that the daimyo's son was a huge flirt and he kept calling Naruko, 'Sugar', 'Darling' and 'Doll'.

They were all thankful he didn't try to feel her up, because as much as she'd been ignoring the names and the promises and the overall sexism, she wouldn't have tolerated that and no one would have expected her to.

Sasuke broke first and it showed in the fact that he kept calling the daimyo's son, 'Idiot' 'Dumbass' and 'Loser'.

By the end of the journey Kiba had relieved Naruko from any and all duties, that had anything to do with the flirt, because he was afraid, she would snap, too. He was also concerned because of the eye twitch Sasuke had developed over the last few days.

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By the time three months were up, they had sixteen C-Rank missions under their belt.

And then Naruko's godfather showed up to one of their training sessions. He was introduced to them by Kakashi, who seemed especially vindictive.

Naruko had just stared at the white-haired giant of a man for a while, not really registering anything after Kakashi had said 'godfather' and Jiraiya had glared at him for it. Sasuke and Kiba on the other hand were on the old fart, before he could explain why he was there. Of course, the two didn't stand much of a chance, because the old fart was a Sannin, but she appreciated the sentiment, none the less.

'Where do you live?' Jiraiya had asked. 'I'll come by later and we can talk about why I am here.'

She stared at him for a second. 'I honestly don't know if I want you to.' She finally said.

After a few moments of tense silence passed, she sighed and told him the address. 'You can come, but you'll have to leave if you're going to freak out about the fact that I'm living together with my boyfriend.' She added belatedly.

Jiraiya stopped cold at that, turned around and asked. 'You're what?'

She blinked at him. 'I'm living together with my boyfriend.'

Jiraiya's face turned an interesting shade. 'You barely have tits yet!' He finally exclaimed.

'Hey!' Naruko screamed in answer. 'I have a solid B Cup and they're still growing, old pervert!'

Jiraiya stared at her. 'What are you on about? A B Cup is nothing!' He finally said.

Naruko stared at him, with barely contained fury. 'Are you seriously going to body shame me in that outfit? You do know that you're wearing a body stocking, ya know?'

Jiraiya stared at her indignantly. 'That is armor!' He called out.

'No!' She countered, deathly serious. 'That is a choice. You're a freaking Sannin, anything that gets passed you, won't be hindered by some flimsy fishnet stocking!'

'Everything on me is a weapon!' Jiraiya boomed.

'Yeah I can see that. You seem to be a real stealth expert with your wooden sandals and that hair.' She finished with a condescending tone, that made Sasuke proud. He taught her that, he thought, with a new warmth in his chest.

'B Cup.' Jiraiya ground out.

'Body stocking.' Naruko ground back.

Kakashi stared at the two for a moment, before he coughed slightly. 'Blondie, you and heart eyes can leave. I'm going to go over a few more tracking techniques with dog breath. I'll see you tomorrow, same time, same place.'

The two of them nodded and left. The only thing they heard was an enraged scream in the distance.

‘You can’t be serious! The Uchiha brat?’

They smiled at each other and held hands all the way back.

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Even though their relationship had not become much more physical, they now slept in the same bed, and had some seriously heated make out sessions, with fewer clothes than before, but they hadn’t done anything more physical, yet.

So, after they got home and showered, the two of them laid on the bed, dressed casually. Naruko pressed against Sasuke’s side, head on his chest, hands trailing over his muscled arm. ‘What are you going to do?’ He finally asked, not used to Naruko’s tense silence.

She didn’t answer immediately.

‘I don’t know yet.’ She finally said.

‘He should have been there for you.’ Sasuke finally said.

Naruko stared up at him and nodded. ‘He should have.’ She agreed easily.

Silence, less tense this time, settled between the two of them.

‘Maybe he couldn’t.’ Sasuke finally said.

Naruko shrugged. ‘I’ll hear him out, but I’m not getting my hopes up.’

Sasuke stared at her.

‘You should be getting your hopes up.’ He finally said.

She looked at him and for the first time in forever he saw the vulnerable little girl in front of him, the one who had been openly mistreated by her academy teachers. The one who had been afraid on the night of the tenth, the one who had looked so fearful when she told him about her burden.

‘There is nothing wrong with having expectations and being hopeful. You have someone here who knew your parents so well, that they made him your godfather. He’ll tell you about them, I’m sure. Expecting the worst of strangers, I get, but this guy hasn’t really done anything yet.’ He said.

Naruko snorted. ‘He really hasn’t, huh?’ She smiled at her boyfriend.

‘I’ll keep an open mind and I’ll let myself hope.’ She finally agreed.

After that the two of them found themselves entangled on the bed and kissed and cuddled for a while.

Tomorrow Lee would be back, so they savored the day, at least until Naruko's godfather showed up.

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They were both dressed in their civilian clothing, she wore her tight black leggings, a dark tank top and an over the shoulder, oversized sweater. He wore his casual outfit, fitted sweatpants and loose fitting T-shirts and they both had been leisurely spread out on the couch, each studying a scroll, when a dark figure had loomed on the windowsill of their living room.

Jiraiya stared at the two of them and looked around the apartment curiously. Not what he expected, at all, he thought.

'B-Cup, heart eyes.' He greeted.

'Body stocking.' She answered, while Sasuke just said 'Hn.'

Sasuke stared at Jiraiya for a moment before he made room for him on the couch, packed up a few scrolls and said to Naruko, 'I'll be right outside.' Before he left.

He had obviously noticed that Jiraiya needed to talk to Naruko alone and he respected that. Maybe he wasn't so bad, Jiraiya thought, when he sat down next to his god daughter.

'So.' She said.

'So?'

'Goddaughter.'

'Ah.'

'Yeah 'Ah'.' She agreed easily.

'What I'm about to tell you is an S-class secret, so you can't share it with anyone, okay?' She nodded, tiredly. Everything was always a secret.

'The Sandaime sent me on a long undercover mission. I was in deep. Have you ever heard about Akatsuki?' He finally asked.

She shook her head tiredly. 'They are a group of S-class ninja that hunt down Jinchuuriki. Their goal is to extract the Bijuu, which always kills the Jinchuuriki, without fail.'

He paused to sort out his thoughts.

'I have known of them for some time and I knew that I needed to protect you, so I did everything I could to infiltrate them.'

She stared at the man before her. If what he said was true, he had dedicated the past fourteen, almost fifteen years to keeping her safe. She mustered him, saw his sincere interest in her and caught him glancing curiously around the apartment. He was obviously trying to connect to her, and she wouldn't risk anything by trying to connect with him, too.

She heaved a deep sigh.
'Okay.' She finally said.

'Hello my name is Naruko Uzumaki. It's nice to meet you.'

Jiraiya smiled at her, relieved. 'Hello Naruko, it's nice to meet you, too. I'm Jiraiya, the Toad Sage, one of the legendary Sannin and a super pervert.'

She snorted, pulling her knees against her chest and leaning her head back against the couch. 'That's quite the title, super pervert.'

'Jiraiya will be fine.' He said, smiling softly at her.

She smiled right back.
'So, what brought you back?' She finally asked.

'The Hokage called me back. He has a retrieval mission for me, and I'd like to take you with me.'

She drummed her fingers nervously against her leg. 'How long will we be gone?'

'Two weeks, give or take a few days.'

'What are we retrieving?'

'Tsunade.'

Naruko's eyes widened. 'Yes.' She said immediately and Jiraiya laughed.

'Careful, she's a drunkard and a gambler. Don't get your hopes up.' He admonished.

She nodded.

'When are we starting?'

'Tomorrow morning.' He said and she nodded.

'So where can I sleep?' asked the legendary Toad Sannin.

'In a hotel? Or a brothel, when you're really a super pervert.' She mused.

He laughed. 'If you thought I'd let you sleep here alone, with that raging horn dog of a teenager, you've thought wrong.' Jiraiya proclaimed, while she burst out laughing.

'I don't think Sasuke has ever been described that way, by anyone.' She finally said.

‘I can see the perverted glint in his eyes.’

‘I think that’s just your own reflection.’ She mused, while the Sannin stared at her, offended.

‘Don’t push it, B-Cup.’ He finally said.

‘Hmm.’ She answered, smiling. ‘I’ll get you a futon. But first, I’m getting Sasuke. Make yourself at home.’ She said, while she jumped out of her window.

The Sage wasn’t a top spy for nothing, he immediately started looking around. However, what he was looking for, he didn’t know. After all, this wasn’t a mission. He just wanted to get to know the smart, beautiful, young woman, he had been trying to protect all these years.

So, he did what he did best, he looked around and gathered information. The moment he entered their little hallway he was stumped. They had put their entire life up on these walls. Their friends, Naruko with the Hokage, and an older man with a scar on his nose, who looked at her like she was his little sister.

Pictures of Naruko in a hospital garb posing with an older man, next to a twitching fish. The Uchiha with his family and later pictures of the Uchiha family with Naruko. There were pictures that showed a young blonde learning how to knit and pictures of the Uchiha proudly wearing a really uneven scarf, that had a lot of clan symbols stitched onto it. He couldn’t help it. He smiled, that was just cute.

There were also a lot of the boy training, eating, posing with a guy in an obnoxious green leotard, and some of a few other guys, probably friends from the academy.

They didn’t put the serious team picture up. They had the goofy one proudly on their wall instead, and not just that, there were a lot more of the three during training or just hanging out. Maybe Team 7 had broken its circle of dysfunctionality with them, he mused.

Pictures of homemade food, that looked increasingly complicated, with little notes were nudged between those of group gatherings and celebrations. He realized quickly that they must have a tradition of some kind where they celebrated important things by making their favorite meals together.

A few of them were also of Naruko posing with Konohamaru. But most of all, the wall was dominated by pictures of her and the Uchiha through the years.

He stopped short at a picture of the Hokage monument, that had been defaced with a bright and colorful love declaration.

The heir to one of the most powerful clans had confessed his feelings in the most public way possible. To the Jinchuuriki, no less.

Well damn, he thought. That’s one hell of a gesture.

On the far-right corner he could see a younger version of Sasuke and the leotard guy evading Anbu, both coated in bright colors and smiling.

She could have done a whole lot worse he decided, then.

They didn't live like most Shinobi, he noted. They had plants and pictures up, there were colorful throw pillows and thick blankets. The two of them obviously put a lot of work into making the place feel like a home.

They weren't just living here, they were thriving and that they managed to do that, with their past, was maybe the biggest accomplishment of their young life. At least in his opinion.

Even if he hadn't been there for her, these walls were decorated with undeniable proof that she'd been cared for, that she'd been loved, that she had made bonds and that she'd fallen in love.

When the two teens came back a few moments later, he crushed them both in a bear hug, much to Sasuke's shock and Naruko's delight.

'You saw the pictures on the wall, huh?' She laughed. 'Let me go, sappy old pervert!' Sasuke groaned exasperated and was only pulled in tighter.

'Heart eyes. You're alright for an Uchiha.' He finally said as he let them go. 'I'll still be crashing here tonight, though.'

Naruko nodded. 'I'll get you a futon.'

Sasuke stared at the man in front of him. 'Any chance I can come with you on that retrieval mission?' He asked curiously.

'Why?' Jiraiya asked.

'You're a Sannin. If you trained me, I could probably get stronger even faster.' He said looking at the older man.

'Why do you want to get stronger?'

'So that I can protect the people I care about.' He said without missing a beat, determination clear in his eyes. Jiraiya nodded.

'This won't be a real training trip, but I'll be back and if you're still interested in learning what I have to teach by the time that happens, I'll help you get stronger. Both of you.' He smiled, widely.

Sasuke looked at the older man with a new-found respect. 'Thank you.' He said with a slight blush.

They quickly prepared the futon and while Jiraiya spread out his things around the futon and made himself at home, Sasuke and Naruko cooked.

Eating together turned out to be much more fun than anyone could have expected.

'I tell you Minato and Kushina were best friends, too, before they got together!' Jiraiya exclaimed. 'No way.' Naruko repeated.

'Of course, they were. Wait I must have some pictures, somewhere.' He grumbled as he went to his pack opened a sealed scroll and released the seal.

Suddenly pictures of a blond blue-eyed young man, a woman that looked just like her and many more fell all over the table.

Sasuke and Naruko were soon going through everything, asking questions and commenting on similarities and differences.

‘You look just like your mother.’ Jiraiya had said, smiling widely. ‘Got the coloring from your father though.’ He added, before mustering her.

‘Your personality is also a lot calmer than her, but you seem to be a good mix of the both.’

Sasuke snorted at that. Naruko was many things, but calm wasn’t necessarily one of them. Even though she wasn’t loud, her actions spoke volumes.

He earned a glare for that from Naruko, and a commiserating hand on the shoulder from Jiraiya.

‘Your mother loved Ramen, too.’ Jiraiya said conspiratorially.

‘Seriously?’ Naruko looked awed.

‘Seriously. It was her favorite food.’

Naruko laughed. ‘I didn’t think we would be similar to each other, ya know?’ She finally said, voice strained, but still smiling happily.

‘You’re their legacy.’ Jiraiya said smiling ‘and a damned good one at that.’

Later that night, the questions became more specific.

‘So, he was a sealing master?’

‘Yes, he learned from me.’ He stared at Naruko for a moment, before he added. ‘I’ll teach you, too.’

Her eyes whipped up, then she thought better of it and stared at Sasuke. Sasuke groaned and said. ‘I promise you that I won’t be an ass about it.’

Jiraiya stared at the weird exchange.

‘Uchiha perfectionism.’ Sasuke explained, while Naruko grumbled ‘Thrice damned elitist bullshit.’

Jiraiya laughed heartily at that.

They spend the rest of the night talking about everything and nothing until they were too tired to continue.

When Sasuke saw Naruko off the next day, she kissed him gently, smiled and said, 'See you soon!' and Sasuke hoped that every parting they'd ever have would feel so nice. Warm, gentle and full of faith that she'd be back soon.

Kiba had dragged himself out of bed and was hugging her tightly, before she laughed and walked towards Jiraiya.

'Your team mate came to see you off?' Jiraiya asked.

'We're pack.' Naruko smiled proudly.

'I'm glad you and your team has such a good relationship.' Jiraiya nodded.

They traveled slowly but surely, Jiraiya used every break to explain something new to her. They'd decided to use the time to introduce her to sealing, which she fell in love with immediately.

It made sense on a beautiful simplistic level. It wasn't boring and it felt so natural to her, that she breezed through her new lessons. For the first time ever learning something new was truly easy for her. She would have cried happy tears, but she didn't want to risk the ink bleeding.

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A few days later, Sasuke overheard a Chunin tell Gai, during training, that Itachi was after Naruko and that he had been seen in the same town as her. Just a few days travel away.

He hadn't even thought about his next steps. All he knew was that he had to get there, and he had to get there quickly. Throwing off his weights he started running, leaving the village and Gai's shocked scream behind in no time.

It had taken him a whole day of adrenaline-fueled running, but he'd made it to the town and immediately asked around.

There weren't a lot of blonde haired, whisker marked kunoichi around, so he was able to find her hotel quickly and he didn't come a second too late.

Itachi had Naruko by the throat, pressed against her door, while the fish man was leering at her.

He'd done it before. Suddenly grateful for Kakashi's over the top training methods, he used his substitution technique on autopilot and saw the surprise in Itachi's face when his younger brother was before him instead of the Jinchuuriki. Sasuke didn't waste any time. He banged his head against Itachi's and heard his older brother's nose break, the grip loosened infinitesimal, but it was enough for him to wiggle out of there.

Next thing he knew, he was pulling Naruko away from her fight with the fish man, and jumped on the roof of the establishment. Gently nudging her behind him.

He was breathing heavy and felt disgusting, but he had to get her away from them.

‘That’s your younger brother?’ ‘Hn.’ ‘He has some speed on him and some guts.’ The fish man commented.

‘Kisame, shut up.’ Itachi answered nasally.

‘He broke your nose, didn’t he?’

‘Hn.’ ‘They’re on the roof—’ and that was when Jiraiya entered the scene and the two Akatsuki hightailed it out of there.

Sasuke stared at the half naked white-haired pervert. He really had to learn from him, if he could make Itachi turn tail like that.

‘You can come down now!’ Jiraiya called.

They both jumped. Jiraiya stared at Sasuke, ‘How did you get here so fast?’

‘Heard Gai talk about it during practice, this morning.’ He was still a little out of breath.

Jiraiya’s eyes widened. ‘You ran from Konoha this morning?’ Sasuke nodded.

Jiraiya stared at the young Uchiha, that Naruko was currently healing and asking about his exhaustion level in a gentle voice.

He had to admit that that was one hell of a tenacity right there.

He was also impressed with Naruko, she’d managed to go up against Kisame, without even a scratch on her. Not that they had gone all out, but still, these guys were still Genin.

‘I’ll teach you.’ He finally said, disrupting Naruko’s and Sasuke’s silent conversation. Sasuke’s eyes widened.

‘You’ve proven to me that protecting your precious people is more important to you, than revenge. That’s all I need to know about you.’

‘I left the village without permission.’ He admitted, with a faint blush.

‘Damn, kid. You’re really gone on her, huh?’ Jiraiya asked, playfully. Naruko blushed but smiled warmly at them both.

After Gai’s very misplaced dynamic entry, it was decided that Sasuke would go back to Konoha with the Green Beast.

‘My youthful student, has proven to me that his passion runs even deeper than I thought!’ Gai said smiling dangerously.

‘The way he was running, showed a lot of promise. New leg weights seem to be in order, my youthful little student!’

Sasuke stared at the older man in abstract horror. He’d literally just got new ones. Well, shit.

‘Not just new leg weights, no. I should reward you for your youthfulness.’ He said smiling even brighter. ‘You’ll get a whole new training regimen.’

Sasuke swallowed.

‘Lee, if I can’t make Sasuke strong enough to win against you by next week, he’ll have to run on his hands one hundred times around Konoha!’

‘Gai! 100 times? I believe in my friend he’ll do 150 times.’

‘Lee, you’re a magnificent student! He’ll have trouble, but to honor you he’ll do 200 times.’ Gai’s screamed, while they both stood in front of the setting sun, at a beach.

Sasuke had turned pale.

‘Yosh! 200 rounds around Konoha with his new weights on, plus extra training!’ Gai said, smiling a little too much, before he looked toward Naruko, ‘You won’t recognize him!’

Sasuke stared at her and she looked slightly alarmed, before she went to her medic pack and gave him the whole thing, without any preamble, he’d need the bruise paste. ‘Take care.’ She said, empathetically.

‘I’ll try to.’ He answered still pale, clutching the medic pack like a life line.

The three left not long after and Naruko had stared at Jiraiya.

‘Itachi had me by the throat before Sasuke showed up.’ She murmured.

Jiraiya watched her.

‘I want to grow stronger, too.’ She finally said and he nodded.

‘You’ll get there. Sasuke had the moment of surprise on his side, too.’

She nodded. ‘He ran for a whole day, because he heard I might be in danger.’ She whispered disbelievingly into the night, feeling a little overwhelmed.

Jiraiya laughed. ‘You guys are disgustingly cute, kid.’

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Meeting Tsunade was an underwhelming experience, to say the least.

The woman was drunk and moping and bathing in self-pity. Something neither Naruko nor Sasuke had ever really let themselves do.

This had been everything she wanted to live up to and if she hadn’t known that she could still admire the woman’s accomplishments, even if she disliked her, she would have been devastated.

‘So what?’ She asked an enraged Tsunade.

‘You understand nothing.’ Tsunade ground out enraged.

‘I understand a lot more than you think, about dealing with this.’ Naruko said indignantly. ‘Not the whole having fought in a war thing, but I know about losing people and this whole woe is me shtick you’ve got going on, is not going to help anyone, least of all you.’ There was real anger in her voice, she had delivered blow for blow calmly, but Jiraiya knew calm was the least of what she was feeling.

Nobody had ever talked to Tsunade like that. She was a direct descendent of the Hokage, a legendary Sannin. She had expected this open dislike from a child, who didn’t know any better, but to have an almost adult explain to her calmly that her behavior was unacceptable was beyond insulting.

So, she did what she always did, when people presumed too much. She threw her fist through the wall and screamed at the young blonde in front of her. They were of course asked to leave after that happened.

Jiraiya found her later.

‘She is talking about stuff she doesn’t understand.’ Tsunade defended herself vehemently.

‘I wouldn’t say that.’ Jiraiya said calmly as he studied his glass.

‘What?’ Tsunade screamed.

‘She’s the Jinchuuriki, Tsunade. A human sacrifice, hated from day one, she was basically adopted by Mikoto Uchiha when she was six and spent a lot of time with that family. She was there that day.’

Tsunade’s eyes widened.

‘She saw Itachi and after that she waited Sasuke out. The boy had just lost everything. His clan, his purpose as the second son, his family. He had just suffered through a horrible betrayal and so did she.’ He stared at her intently.

‘The two are a couple, now. They’re living together. They are happy.’

He gulped his drink back.

‘She doesn’t know about war and I guess that after what we’ve been through the few connections, we have left are even more important. Carry us more than anyone will ever know. So, I guess I can give you that.’

He paused carefully watching Tsunade, who looked like she’d been slapped in the face.

‘She may be young, but that girl knows grief, and she knows healing and it’s not like she isn’t right about you.’

Tsunade stared at him. ‘So, what are you saying? You’re looking down on me, too?’ She finally asked, steeling herself for the answer.

Jiraiya shook his head in sadness. 'I empathize with you. She doesn't. She sees an older woman who lost people, she loved dearly and gave up on life. I see my team mate who is recuperating. Someone who is still struggling, but I know you'll find your way.' He said, smiling mildly at her.

The woman shrunk back on herself and nodded. She left her drink untouched at the bar as she made her way back to her hotel room.

That night she didn't get a wink of sleep. She had a horrible thought instead. If Nawaki was still alive now, how would he view her? Would he judge her, too? Would he be sad that she left the village behind? Dan would understand. She was sure... But Nawaki he wouldn't have understood. He grew up in a war. Grew up losing people, died for Konoha and she had turned her back on his sacrifice.

She swallowed back tears, when a knock at her door, ripped her out of her horrible thoughts.

It was the girl.

'What?' She asked, furious.

Naruko stared at her for a moment before shaking her head. 'I came here to apologize to you.' Naruko said, holding the angry gaze of the older woman.

'I know better than to judge anyone for the way they grieve or for how long they need to work through something like this, if they ever do.' She sighed tiredly and watched the older woman.

'I'm deeply sorry for saying what I did and the way I did it. It wasn't my place. It wasn't helpful and hurting you is the last thing I want to do.' She looked earnest when she said that, biting her lip, watching Tsunade carefully.

The older woman stared at the younger one, before she noticed something.

'What's that?'

Naruko held up a bottle of Sake and her game of ninja poker. 'I thought you might like a distraction. Sasuke always has trouble sleeping when something happens that reminds him...' She left the rest unsaid.

Tsunade stared at the girl. This was genuine. She had brought Sake and a game to apologize and wanted to keep her company.

She nodded. 'I accept your apology.' She said after a while. 'But don't do it again.'

Naruko seemed relieved as she nodded. 'I won't.'

'You ever got drunk?' Tsunade asked.

'Once, with my team. To celebrate the end of the D-Rank missions from hell.'

'You're getting drunk tonight.' Tsunade said determinedly and Naruko laughed.

'So, what are the stakes?' Naruko asked.

‘If I win, you and Jiraiya go back to Konoha without me tomorrow.’ Tsunade said determinedly. ‘If you win, I’ll come back with you.’

Naruko stared at her for a moment. ‘And you’ll take me on as an apprentice.’ She added.

Tsunade laughed. ‘Ninja Poker is my best game. Tell you what, if you win, I’ll come back, be your teacher and you can have my necklace. You in?’

Naruko laughed. ‘Hell yeah, I’m in!’

And damn, Tsunade lost like nobodies’ business. Round after round. Even though Naruko was smashed by the end of it, she still dominated. They fell asleep on the bed, surrounded by cards the empty Sake bottle on the ground.

When Jiraiya came to search for her the next morning, he found two very hung-over blondes that were in no condition to travel.

He took sadistic pleasure in making them, regardless.

After Tsunade had given her the necklace, she told her it would help control the Kyuubi’s chakra. Naruko smiled at her and when Jiraiya met her eyes he’d wink at her and grin proudly.

Life was good.

Everyone deserves a Happy End

Chapter Notes

Surprise Updates are the best Updates and when you're not on a set schedule, every update is a surprise :D (Sorry for that one btw) Anyway, I really, really hope you guys enjoy this because I'm really happy with how this turned out ♥😊

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



Upon their return home, Tsunade immediately started her training. They spent a lot of time in the hospital, which led to Tsunade catching Kabuto stealing patient information.

The young man was promptly brought to T&I, escorted by Kakashi and Jiraiya, who had been called to the scene.

After Ibiki broke him, he immediately had him executed for treason and brought the information to the Hokage.

The Hokage didn't wait long to send a reminder to the Kazekage that he was not only in breach of contract with Konoha, but every other hidden village. He didn't need to say more, everybody knew what Shinobi did to traitors.

The only way to prove his loyalty now, was to engage his former ally, Otogakure and Orochimaru in battle. He also made it very clear that there would be no reinforcements from Konoha.

The Kazekage complied within days. The villages knew, since the last Chunin exams, which had been held in Sunagakure that his son was a very unstable Jinchuuriki. Strong, yeah? But if they let him roam, he wouldn't be able to tell the difference between an ally and an enemy so that made him also a very useless weapon.

No other Jinchuuriki had these problems, which automatically put Suna in a very compromised position.

Otogakure didn't have a Jinchuuriki at all, which meant Suna had a good chance of winning against them.

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Their Chunin promotion had come as a field promotion. The three of them had successfully apprehended Zabuza and Haku and deposited of the crime boss Gato, in Nami no Kuni.

Kakashi had realized they deserved it, when he had handled them unconsciously how he would have commanded his Anbu squad. He didn't even need to tell Kiba to track them, while Sasuke took out Gato and Naruko handled the thugs that were still strolling around Wave like they owned the place.

After his first confrontation with Zabuza, he took the time to truly recuperate and Naruko healed him back up in no time.

All in all, the final confrontation was short and efficient, because Sasuke had brought Gato's head with him, which made it more than clear that nobody would get paid.

After they pulled that off, he'd brought his observations to the Hokage who struggled, because he had planned to show off their teamwork in the next Chunin exams. Upon further reflection, he realized that there was no good reason not to promote someone who clearly deserved it and had signed up on it.

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Training with Tsunade was harsh. She had Naruko run drills, like she'd never run drills before.

She also, let her work on severe cases in the hospital with little to no supervision, to up the pressure (and up the pressure it did). It was challenging and horrifying, but she grew on this. Her experiences helped her gain more confidence in what she could do.

She also realized that she truly wasn't doing this all by herself. If something seriously went wrong, she could always call for help and would actually receive it. Jinchuuriki or not.

After a year had passed Naruko was focusing a lot more on Tsunade's fighting style, then on healing. She had decided that even though she loved medical Jutsu, she wouldn't stay in the hospital, while she was in the village.

Well she would come in, if she was needed, but she wasn't up for committing to be a part time medic just yet. She'd rather further her combat knowledge and her experience by going on missions with her team, instead. To her surprise Tsunade agreed.

'It should never be your sole goal, to emulate your teachers. You should strive to surpass them instead.' She said, while smiling brightly and proudly at her.

So, she happily started orienting herself on elements of the taijutsu style Sasuke learned, while also studying the seals that Jiraiya left her regularly. They found self-study was the way to go, when it came to Fuinjutsu.

At least for Naruko. It just worked better that way, because she had an instinctual understanding of what the seal was supposed to do and Jiraiya didn't want to confuse that by having her listen to him explain something she understood at first glance.

By the time she had the Strength of a Hundred seal, she was already a well-versed medic and a great fighter.

'You wouldn't have gotten here so far if you hadn't worked your ass off these past few years.' Tsunade had explained smiling.

'Thankfully we were able to build up on that.' Naruko agreed, absolutely beat, as she laid on Tsunade's couch a book on poison extraction covering her face, arms too heavy to hold it up any longer.

Tsunade laughed.

‘So, when will heart eyes be back?’

‘Next week probably.’

‘And?’ Tsunade asked grinning widely.

‘And Jiraiya will come with him.’ Naruko sighed.

‘Tell you what, if he tries to guard the two of you again, by insisting on sleeping in your apartment, I’ll come by and pick him up myself.’

Naruko swiped the book from her face and sat up. ‘Seriously?’

‘Seriously. See it as a late birthday present to your sixteenth birthday or an early one for your seventeenth, I don’t care.’

Naruko laughed brightly.

‘Thank god. We waited long enough.’ She murmured.

‘You sure did.’ Tsunade hummed.

‘Can’t say we didn’t try, but with Jiraiya there, we both sort of ...’

‘Yes, Jiraiya truly inspires inappetency.’ Tsunade agreed while Naruko laughed heartily.

‘Harsh but true.’ She finally agreed.

‘Make sure he doesn’t skip out on preparing you or else it’s going to hurt.’ Tsunade added.

‘Preparing me is not the issue.’ She said smiling widely.

‘Oh, isn’t it?’ Tsunade asked grinning.

‘That part of it, we have down to an art. We just never get around to actually doing it.’ Naruko explained shamelessly.

Well, they were both shameless about it. Sex was fun and they had basically explored everything they could, without actually having it, even though they really wanted to have it.

Well, Sasuke wasn’t as vocal about it as her, because he was traveling with said cockblock. But he sure would be, if it didn’t lead to his death.

It had really sucked that Sasuke had been gone for most of the last year and half-ish of their apprenticeship.

They understood why of course, they did. Jiraiya’s spy network wouldn’t just wait for him to be done teaching.

It also wasn’t like Sasuke hadn’t come by plenty of times to see her, even if it was just for a day.

The problem was, so had Jiraiya, who still insisted on crashing at their place.

She sighed while she stared at the book she was currently trying to internalize, while Tsunade laughed at her quietly. The older woman hadn’t believed her for the most part when she had admitted that she hadn’t been doing it with Sasuke at the start of her apprenticeship.

It would seem weird to talk about that kind of stuff with your teacher, but Naruko didn’t really have any female friends that she could talk to about those things. Talking with the boys about it, always left them incredibly red-faced, which didn’t help at all.

Tsunade and her were getting along and they were talking openly about a lot of different aspects of their life. It was nice to have this connection to her. To have something that was more than just teacher and student.

She thought about all that while rereading the same sentence about poison extraction for a third time, when she heard a loud bang and saw a winded Sasuke climb hastily through the

window.

Tsunade pulled up her left eyebrow up, as she stared at Sasuke who grinned like he'd won the lottery.

'What are you doing here?' Naruko asked surprised. He shouldn't be here for another week.

'I got rid of my weights and ditched the pervert two towns over, when he went to sleep. We should have a day and a half until he gets here. At least.' He finally said, staring at her in pure glee.

Tsunade chortled in her seat, as Naruko hopped off the couch, hurriedly screamed 'I'll be back tomorrow!' and dragged Sasuke back out the window.

Tsunade had just enough time to scream a heartfelt 'Use protection!' after them.

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When they reached their apartment and pulled open the door Naruko immediately pressed up against him and whispered. 'You're the best.' Before they started a deep and slow kiss, that left them wanting more.

They separated with a groan and stumbled to the shower. Sasuke went in first, but after a few moments a very naked Naruko joined him and they finally were able to take things to the bedroom.

Later that day, the two laid naked under the sheets. She had laid her head on Sasuke's chest while he'd slung an arm around her and held her against him, playfully drawing patterns on her back.

Round one had been so much fun that they'd done it a few more times over the course of the day. Exploring the other's body, going fast, then taking their time. There was beauty in the completion she felt when Sasuke moved against her. There was intimacy in the way they looked at each other and, in the way, they took their time learning what the other liked and how.

When Jiraiya had shown up the next day and seen them, he'd groaned theatrically.

'No grandkids, before you're married!' He said sternly, before he grumbled something about having to search for a hotel, then he looked at the Uchiha again.

'And for the love of good, no love bites! You're not thirteen anymore.' Sasuke blushed profusely and Naruko laughed. She knew that she had a giant love bite on the side of her neck, but she didn't mind.

She was too relaxed and happy to care.

'So.' She said after Jiraiya had left.

'So.' Sasuke agreed.

'I think I love having sex.' She finished.

Sasuke laughed. 'Well, lucky me.' He whispered against her neck and pulled her against him again.

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When they sat on the couch later, each deeply focused on their work, Sasuke asked her. 'Do you still want to be Hokage?'

Naruko stared at him in wonder. 'I said that once, when I was like six.'

He nodded. 'At the beginning of the academy, when we introduced ourselves.'

'I don't think I ever really wanted to be Hokage.' She finally said.

'I wanted to be seen, acknowledged. Loved.' She finished.

Sasuke stared at her. 'You could do it. Later, I mean. First would have to come Tsunade, but after her...'

She stared at him for a second. 'When was the last time you've seen the Sandaime outside his office?'

Sasuke stared at her in shock.

'Exactly. I can't remember seeing him do anything but work, either.'

'Well, shit.' Sasuke murmured.

'I don't want that for myself. I'd rather make like Jiraiya and Tsunade. Make a name for myself and spend my life doing what I want. That way when the time comes to step up, I'll be able to do so without any regrets, but until then, I want to do what makes me happy.'

Sasuke stared at her. 'That seems like a great idea, actually. Well, when we have children, we'll need to come up with a plan, but until then.'

Naruko smiled. 'I can do the part time medic thing, when that happens. As long as you regularly switch with me, so that I can still do missions and won't get rusty.'

He laughed. 'As if you'd ever get rusty. But sure, we'll take it on as a team.' He smiled at her.

'I hope one of our kids has your eyes.'

'Oh shit.' Naruko groaned. 'You just got us more.'

Sasuke laughed, loud and bright. 'I was upfront about reinstating my clan.'

'Fuck, no. I draw the line at three.'

Sasuke stared at her. 'I was thinking two, but I can work with that.'

'Damn.' Naruko cursed playfully.

-

The Sandaime died within that same year, protecting the village against Pain.

Team 7 had fought heroically on his side and together they'd taken out two of the Pains before they could destroy the village.

It was true that they'd been immediately scouted to come and help. A huge reason for that was that two of the three members of their team were students of the Sannin.

However, the Inuzuka turned out to be an amazing help, too, since he could track the pains all over the city.

Jiraiya and Tsunade had taken out two of them, before they left to support the Hokage, who had fought off the remaining two and their summons and actually killed the real one and Kanon, without mercy, before he died. Jiraiya was shocked to see the bodies, when everything was over, but he had understood that he couldn't have hoped for mercy.

The god of Shinobi had truly proven himself that day to the village.

The battleground just outside of Konoha was truly awe inducing. If this had happened inside, there wouldn't have been much left to protect.

Konohamaru had been trying to keep strong during the funeral, slightly hovering next to Naruko, who hugged the young man to her side.

Later that night, Asuma had come to pick him up from their apartment and Naruko had promised to teach the kid the Rasengan.

It was a sad day for Konoha. It understood what had been lost.

Tsunade was promptly announced as the next Hokage and before long her face was also immortalized in stone.

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One of her first acts was the promotion of Team 7, who had taken out two of the Pains alone. They were now fully fledged Jounin.

She'd asked Naruko to make weekly visits to the hospital and report back to her, which she did, but other than that, the time after the attack was spent with Konohamaru, training herself, and ironically training Konohamaru.

At least until there were new missions available.

Jiraiya and Sasuke were on their way to Sunagakure to help the Jinchuuriki there with his seal. Well Jiraiya was there to help, Sasuke was there to defend him if things went south.

Naruko had gained a lot of respect from the villagers. They'd seen her fight or heard the stories and they'd been impressed. It also helped that she'd been in the tents after the attack and healed each and every one that needed help. Being the chakra tank, she was, she truly didn't mind staying and healing whoever.

That had garnered her a lot of respect.

Her team mates had helped with the repairs of the few homes that had gotten damaged and send anyone with a wound or a broken bone her way.

They'd truly grown as a team, looking back at the past few days, she thought exhaustedly, while she tried to ignore Konohamaru's snoring.

The young boy had taken Sasuke's joke to take good care of her a little too serious and had insisted on sleeping over for as long as Sasuke was gone. Or at least that was what he claimed. The boy knew of course that she was incredibly strong, but she didn't truly believe that that was his reason for staying anyway, so she didn't mind.

He's probably lonely, she thought. She liked Konohamaru. Always had. He was like the little brother she never had. He'd open up to her, when he was ready.

Sasuke had been gone for a week and her and Konohamaru were shopping for groceries, when Sakura approached her. This was the first time the girl had talked to her since the academy.

‘Hey Naruko!’ She waved at her, seemingly happy to see her.

Naruko just pulled up an eyebrow and answered. ‘Hey Sakura?’

‘So glad to see you!’ Sakura answered, still happy.

‘Okay.’ Naruko didn’t have a lot of woman in her life, never had. Tsunade was the exception and the woman had little to no decorum, so playing this game wasn’t easy for Naruko.

‘I was wondering, if you could talk to Tsunade for me?’ The other girl asked, hesitantly.

Naruko frowned. ‘What about?’

‘I’d like to learn medical ninjutsu and since she’s taken you as an apprentice, I thought she might be open to teaching me as well.’

‘Tsunade will respect you more when you ask her yourself.’ She said, because that was the best advice, she could give the girl.

‘I’ve tried approaching her, but she won’t see me. Will you ask for me?’ Sakura asked, fake smile firm in place.

Naruko sighed. If her teacher didn’t even want to see the girl the answer was definitely no and she didn’t want to be the one to break the news to her, so she did the only thing she could think of.

‘Konohamaru!’

‘Yes!’ came a voice two isle’s deep into the grocery store. ‘We’re shopping later, first we’ll visit Tsunade.’

Konohamaru came out of the isle with his arms full of groceries. 'Well, shit.' He said.

Naruko stared at him for a second.

Then she looked at Sakura, 'You have time, right?'

The girl was stumped. 'Um, sure?'

'Great. We'll finish shopping and then we'll go to Tsunade, together.'

'Thank Kami.' Konohamaru mumbled while Naruko snorted.

'What do you mean we're going to Tsunade?'

'You can't get in, I can get in no problem. I take you with me, you'll ask, she answers, done.'

Naruko surmised, while she piled fresh produce into her basket and put the instant ramen, that Konohamaru had bravely sneaked into it, back on the shelves.

Sakura stared at her. 'So, you won't do it for me?' She asked.

Naruko stared at the girl. 'No, I won't, because the answer will be a definite 'no' when I ask her for you, if you don't think it's worth going there and introducing yourself, you should just drop it.'

Sakura looked angry and bitter, before she reigned it in and smiled again.

Fat chance I believe that smile, Naruko thought. But now she remembered again, why she didn't want the girl anywhere near her home. She was unstable.

'We'll meet you in an hour at the Hokage tower.' She said and Sakura nodded.

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The whole shebang didn't even go for five minutes, because Tsunade immediately denied the girl.

It was incredibly awkward because Naruko and Konohamaru were still in the office. Naruko groaned. So much, for not getting more involved than necessary.

Needless to say, Sakura was not pleased. 'Why wouldn't you even hear me out?' She asked furiously.

Tsunade remained calm as she explained, 'Multiple teachers and people who have worked with you have made formal complaints about your emotional instability, your violent behavior towards your team mates and your inability to be impartial towards your comrades.

'Your behavior has been deemed less than professional, which would be enough for me to deny you, but on top of that you haven't shown up to your psychological evaluation for the past two years, which is unacceptable. You've been ordered to get one done every year after the stalking incident until there was no more cause for concern. Since, you weren't able to complete that requirement, I can't and won't take you on. Not as a student, not even as a member of staff. I'm sorry, but that just isn't possible, even if you have exceptional chakra control.'

Needless to say, Sakura had been pissed as hell. 'Who reported on me? And what for exactly? They must have cited incidents, right? Was it Ino? Of course, it was Ino, or Chouji that fat idiot.' She screeched.

Tsunade stared at the pink haired woman in front of her and shook her head. 'You're dismissed.' She finally said.

Sakura seemed on the brink of insubordination, but when Naruko gave her a sharp glance she seemed to sober up and think better of it.

Naruko had never liked Sakura, that much was true, but she didn't want the other girl to suffer, either.

Tsunade stared after the pink haired girl before she shook her head. 'Steer clear of her, Naruko. There's a reason everyone reports her for unstable behavior.'

She nodded solemnly.

The whole thing had convinced Konohamaru of the fact that Sakura was trouble, which lead him to pranking her. She was now his mortal enemy, which of course was ridiculous. But Konohamaru's little pranks were amusing and they truly didn't cause any serious trouble, so no one took them too seriously.

Well, except for Sakura. She could be seen running after his trio all over Konoha, which seemed like a great distraction from her most recent rejection, so all in all Konohamaru unwittingly caused more good than harm with his pranks.

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When Sasuke came back he'd brought something with him. The conserved body and soul of Orochimaru. The guy was caught in a space time Jutsu and Tsunade immediately set to preparing a room in which he could be executed for treason.

He'd also brought a new proximity seal with him, that would always let the young couple know when the other was near.

It warmed slightly and Naruko had immediately dragged him to a tattoo artist, payed the man to use his equipment and tattooed it on Sasuke and then on herself. He had asked her to put it over his heart and she done her own one on the inside of her wrist.

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When Team 10 came back a few months later they'd lost their Sensei, which made Konohamaru a constant resident on their couch.

No questions asked.

Team 7 was quickly called to aide Team 10 on their revenge mission, which they did. They took out two more Akatsuki members.

Hidan and Kakuzu, Shikamaru, overwhelmed the immortal and Sasuke destroyed the Kakuzu, after Naruko had him nailed down in position using seals, with a new version of his Chidori.

They all missed Asuma's funeral, but at least they'd made sure that the people that hurt him, would never hurt anyone else ever again.

Konohamaru's move lead to Naruko's mastering of the strongest close range/proximity silencing seal, that Sasuke had ever seen. The thing was probably only in the Hokage's office and in their bedroom. For sexy times. The hilarity of that was not lost on him.

Sasuke hadn't been over the moon when the kid moved in with them. Mainly because their flat was really small, and this wasn't just a temporary arrangement.

But they'd made room for his academy books, bought a small shelf for his clothes, his toiletries fit right in, next to their own in their bathroom and pictures of his friends and Asuma were now among the ones in the hallway.

It wasn't like they couldn't get used to it.

However, Sasuke had already cornered the landlady and asked if they could potentially expand the apartment, if they rented out the one next to it, too.

The answer was no, but the woman had some heartfelt advice for him. 'If you have that much money, get out of this shithole and rent out something nice. You're still young! Change won't kill you!' She exclaimed

'Hn.' Sasuke murmured.

-

Moving out was kind of tough for them both and Konohamaru was really happy with the way things were right now, so they just left it for the moment.

The moment didn't take too long though, because Tsunade confronted them a week later, with the news that she'd gotten them a bigger apartment. It was in a nice building, that was decent enough. It was as bright and beautiful, as their old one and it had a nice view and a bathtub and damnit, they were sold on it.

Moving out of their haven was still hard, though. They still had an open kitchen/ living room situation and a big balcony with a washing line. But now they also had more. They had two bathrooms, one with a toilet and another with a toilet and a bathtub/shower combo, two bedrooms and a beautiful view of Konoha and the monument.

They enlisted their friends and were done in no time. Konohamaru also enlisted his friends to help and together they managed to get most of the teens stuff from his old bedroom in his new one.

The plants had more room to grow and so had the inhabitants of the apartment. It took them less than two days to make their new place as homey and welcoming and right feeling as their old one. Sasuke smiled at the beautiful blonde by his side.

His last moving experience had been horrid. He'd struggled for weeks and this one had been no problem at all. He knew what kind of effect she had on him, but this whole experience just drove the point home.

He was ready to take the next step.

When Naruko woke up the next morning and looked out of the window the Hokage monument was defaced again, this time it was even bigger and brighter than last time and the message read loud and clear. 'Will you marry me, Naruko Uzumaki?'

She laughed happily as she saw a slightly rumpled Sasuke drag Konohamaru behind him, while they ditched the ANBU with Lee and she screamed at the top of her lungs 'YES I WILL!'

Sasuke paused for a moment laughed, threw Konohamaru at the ANBU officer, who caught him effortlessly and came to get his kiss from her.

She laughed when she realized that the ANBU had waited for them to pull apart, picked up her camera and shot a picture of three ANBU agents, picking up one grinning Sasuke Uchiha while the Hokage monument and the question shone brightly behind them. Another one for the books, she thought lovingly.

When Sasuke was delivered to Tsunade, Jiraiya was already there and clapped the man on the back. Konohamaru, was seated and so was Lee. But they were both grinning as much as Sasuke.

‘We’re celebrating’ Tsunade announced as she brought out the Sake.

Konohamaru nodded and Tsunade laughed. ‘You’re not celebrating midget. The grownups are. You and your genin team are doing clean up. I heard someone did something to the Hokage monument.’ She winked at Sasuke as she ordered that and Konohamaru groaned at the injustice of the world, before he smiled at Sasuke and walked right outside to gather his troop.

He would never regret being a part of that.

Moments later, Naruko came through the window, eyes bright, hair shining golden in the morning sun and smiling like she was the happiest person on earth.

‘I heard we’re celebrating.’ She said with a foxy grin.

‘Damn straight we are.’ Jiraiya said and hugged his goddaughter to him.

‘When are you going to get married?’ Tsunade implored.

‘When we’re eighteen.’ Sasuke and Naruko said at once.

‘So, six months until the wedding, huh?’ Tsunade asked wistfully.

‘Hmm.’ Naruko hummed when she sat down on Sasuke’s armrest and he put an arm around her hips.

‘You’ve done well for yourselves.’ Jiraiya said proudly.

‘Let’s drink!’ Tsunade exclaimed and that was the story about how the Hokage tower had been shut down for the day, because the Hokage and several other high class Jounin had gotten drunk in her office instead.

It also became the day, that Naruko and Sasuke almost traumatized Konohamaru, because sloppy Naruko wasn’t as proficient with the sealing technique as she liked to believe. Thank kami, Sasuke had recast the seal again after staring at the weird smudge that his lovely fiancé

claimed was a 'sufficiently secure' seal. His perimeter was a little too wide, but Konohamaru would be thankful either way because he didn't hear nothing.

-

Not a month later, the Kazekage died and Gaara took his place. The Jinchuuriki was concerned with the sightings of Akatsuki and had asked Tsunade for reinforcements. So, Team 7 and Team 9 had been sent out, for the first time as a unit.

Neiji seemed kind of stuck up and weird and regarded Sasuke as someone rebellious. He kept referring to him as the one who couldn't stop defacing the Hokage monument, which Naruko found hilarious.

Tenten was a really nice girl, her patience must have been something else, because Lee and Gai seemed extreme on their own, but Neiji wasn't much better, he was just as exhausting, but in a different way.

Kiba seemed to like Tenten a lot and Naruko hoped they'd work out. Something they'd never been able to do, no matter what they achieved was ditching the lovingly picked nicknames their teacher had picked for them.

After almost 4 years of this, they'd realized, they'd stay heart eyes, blondie and dog breath for life.

So, let's just say working with a new team was often confusing for everyone.

They reached the sand a day before the invasion and fought with Gaara to stop it. Sasuke had quickly realized that Deidara was defenseless against electricity so after a few well-placed diversion tactics that relied on Naruko's brutal force, he'd killed the man with a Chidori to his heart.

Neiji's Byakugan saw quickly through what Sasori was or more accurately what was left of him and Team Ten made with the help of Kankuro and Gaara quick work of executing the other member.

In the end it was decided that both bounties should go to Konoha and they were sent back.

The only problem there was that Itachi and Kisame met them along the way and had decidedly different ideas for them, especially for Naruko. But after Gai killed Kisame and Sasuke and Naruko almost cornered Itachi, the other man fled the scene.

—

They'd been gone for three weeks total and were surprised when they saw that Konohamaru had the kitchen fully stocked and ready for their arrival. That was so incredibly heartwarming and sweet that there'd been cuddles, which an embarrassed Konohamaru would probably deny forever. However, Naruko wasn't about to be deterred.

Jiraiya met up with them later that evening and explained that Kakashi, him and the last generations Ino-Shika-Chō would be going on an assassination mission, to kill Tobi and Zetsu, which were the only other members currently in the Akatsuki, since Itachi had succumbed to an illness shortly after their confrontation.

Sasuke took the news, that Itachi was dead relatively well. He had needed a day or two of intense training with Lee and Gai and some downtime with their friends, but then he'd come around, because what could he do now?

Shikamaru had said it best. 'Why are you moping? Be glad that you didn't have to do it.'

Harsh, but true.

Naruko had taken to visiting Iruka more often at the academy and helped him do demonstrations, to engage his students more.

The highlight of Konohamaru's week was when she described the technology behind the Rasengan and announced proudly that her student, Konohamaru, would show them how it's done.

Iruka almost couldn't believe it when the teen succeeded in performing the technique.

Why he thought Konohamaru wouldn't be able to do it, he didn't know. The boy was thirteen and he lived together with two very talented Jounin. Of course, he had picked things up along the way.

Iruka groaned trying to remember the mismatched tea set that had pulled him through the last time he'd thought in depth about his crazy students.

Who the fuck casually picks up on the Rasengan?

He heaved a deep sigh. The kids were crazy. He knew better than to try and understand.

—

Kakashi and Jiraiya missed their wedding. It was a small affair.

They invited all of their friends, Team 9 and Team 10, Gai, Tsunade and Shizune, Ryosuke her old medic ninjutsu teacher, Iruka and many more. Even Teuchi and Ayame from Ichiraku's were there.

They followed some of the Uchiha traditions.

Sasuke wore traditional garb and so did Naruko, a lot of pictures were taken.

They danced and laughed and got drunk. Them and their friends were up until the early morning, dancing with them, laughing with them, celebrating their love.

It wasn't a perfect wedding. Kakashi and Jiraiya weren't there for one, but they didn't care.

They couldn't wait for the two of them to come back, because Tsunade had made it clear that they could possibly stay undercover for years. So, she told them to not even think about putting their life's on hold.

It was valuable advice.

They'd celebrate with them when they came back.

Plus, Naruto had printed out two big picture of their teachers and posed with them in her dress, as had Sasuke. So, technically they were still a part of the wedding.

Neiji thought it a little dark, because their teachers weren't dead, but Naruko insisted that they'd both find it hilarious and even if they didn't, Naruko and Sasuke sure had fun with it.

By the end of the night they had pictures of a drunk Neiji picking up shots with his mouth from the picture of Jiraiya's face and they would treasure those pictures forever.

Jiraiya would later brag about his charisma and that even a mere likeness of himself got more action than a real life Kakashi at any event.

—

Their honeymoon phase didn't last long however, because tensions with Kumo were running high.

Tsunade wanted Naruko there as her ambassador. So, she sent her with Team 9 to get it done.

Neiji was still trying to bargain with her about destroying that picture, but he had no chance there and his mood wasn't necessarily a good one, when he started to realize that.

She could honestly say she hated her work as an ambassador, but she pulled it off.

She was even offered a way to communicate with the Kyuubi, maybe even a way to befriend him, like Killer Bee had done.

They offered that in exchange for an inclusion into their peace treaty with Sunagakure.

She'd used her summons, frogs, to let Tsunade know what the new conditions could be.

Tsunade immediately agreed, but set a few of her own, mainly that Kumo formally apologizes to the Hyuuga clan for the international incident.

After another week of horror. She'd got the deal done.

Thank fucking god and was promptly send to any island with Team 9.

To say the fox was pissed was putting it mildly.

Thankfully she didn't have any deep dark seated repressed hate. Sure, she'd craved and wanted things and had reacted badly to not receiving them.

And yes, she'd compared herself to others and had felt bitter about what she'd realized in the process.

But these weren't feelings she had to shut down. This was just another part of being human.

Dark Naruko was as much part of her, as light Naruko and accepting that had been the real challenge at the waterfall. It wasn't a fight for dominance. It was a fight for recognition.

See me. Feel me. Stop fearing me. Stop hiding from me. Stop being ashamed of me.

Well she probably would have spent more time there, if she hadn't acknowledged that this was as much a part of her as anything else, a long time ago.

She could confidently say that she was beyond happy in her life and positively brimming with love for her precious people and that was what she chose to focus on. Negativity would always be a part of her life. She dealt with injuries on the daily. She confronted her own fears and those of her important people. She was a ninja for fucks sake.

She knew that she wasn't perfect, not by a long shot. But she was brave enough to know that she didn't have to be.

After a week of mediation and letting the beast vent and scream at her and tell her how much the meat bags sucked and that she was just another one of them, she started screaming back.

'Is trying to be happy so fucking scary for you?'

'Meat bag, you're talking to—'

'I know exactly who I'm talking to! You are miserable and I understand why. Ya know? Fuck, your life sucked, but here I am, standing before you, offering understanding for your situation, an alternative way of living that includes you, and friendship and you won't stop BITCHING!'

She breathed heavily now.

‘And don’t even fucking start with the assumptions that I’m just using you, you’re fucking living within me! I’m your fucking meat bag and I’m not doing it because I want to. Ya know? Or do you honestly think baby me had an evil masterplan and thought the best way to enact that, was getting the Kyuubi sealed in me?’

She let her fingers run through her braid and stared at the dumbfounded fox before her before she asked her final question,

‘You’re a being made out of chakra, that’s heavily influenced by malice and hatred. Do you get any of that from me?’

The Kyuubi stared at her for a few moments, without saying anything. When Naruko sat down in front of his cage and in the freaking sewer water, he looked down at her and she stared for a moment.

Now, that the fox wasn’t snarling at her, he didn’t even look that scary.

‘So, what’s your name?’ She tried again, having calmed down significantly after she got that out of her system.

The fox stared at her for a few moments. ‘I’m Kurama.’

And the rest was history.

She’d met her parents, both of them and talked with them about her life and could for the first time ever ask what their life had been like and most importantly, she was able to say goodbye.

They were both a little shocked to see that she was married, but after she told them a little about Sasuke, they got over it fast.

Well her father stared into the distance and murmured something along the lines of ‘I knew that baby would be a problem.’ But she ignored that, because she didn’t want to think of her father as someone who needed mental help.

Kurama and her created a new mind space, where the fox was lying on a field of grass and watching the sun set. She tried to get the smell right and he was amused by her 'stupid nose'.

Apparently, it missed the best parts. The fox had been grateful for the change in scenery, none the less.

They'd also made the deal, that they'd only be in direct contact with each other when she meditated or there was an emergency.

Upon her return to Konoha she demonstrated her new abilities to Tsunade who was incredibly proud. However, something else had happened there, while she was gone.

One of the councilmen, Danzo had approached Sasuke and tried to make a deal with him concerning his eyes and their first-born kid, needless to say, Danzo was dead now. He hadn't lasted long against the combined efforts of Tsunade and Sasuke.

However, what had come out of the whole ordeal was worse than any of them had anticipated.

Sasuke learned what the council had done with Itachi.

Tsunade spent the last month reconditioning Root members and sorting through the illegal machinations behind the council.

When she found an assassination plan against the daimyo of fire, she knew she had them.

They tried to negotiate, but she immediately let the daimyo know, who in turn demanded their execution.

She let Sasuke do it and didn't appoint another council, what she did appoint instead was a second.

It was someone who would have the same authority as her and be able to question and correct her decisions. If they did, they had to explain their reasoning in front of the clan heads, and they'd vote on the matter.

As her second she appointed Jiraiya, who had already let her know, that he'd be back by the end of next months and that their mission had been a success.

Even though there were positive changes all around, Sasuke had been devastated and understandably so. The whole situation was seriously messed up.

When she reached the apartment, he had clung to her like a lifeline.

‘I’m so glad I didn’t do it.’ He ended up telling her over and over again. Yeah, Naruko thought, sadly, me too.

If he’d killed him, she didn’t know what would have happened.

But they’d work through it. They did it before and they’d do it again. This experience was just another part of life that demanded to be felt and experienced, no matter how much it hurt.

-

Nine months later, Naruko and Sasuke celebrated the birth of their first child.

It was a baby boy with bright blue eyes and dark hair. They named him Jiraiya.

He was healthy and beautiful and Sasuke cried when he held him. Jiraiya cried, too and that was the funniest thing Naruko’s drug addled mind had ever seen.

Either way Naruko was incredibly proud of her little family.

Konohamaru had moved in with Moegi, the moment they both made Genin, but he still showed up regularly and even helped with babysitting, when they were on missions. They named Kiba Inuzuka as the godfather and the man’s smile shone brighter than the sun.

There second child came a year later and was a girl with bright blonde hair and dark eyes, she looked exactly like her mother, except for her eyes.

Sasuke held little Jiraiya when he showed him his new sister and introduced her as Mikoto, for his mother. Rock Lee was the little girl’s godfather and he was over the moon.

After that they stopped having kids. They wanted to be there for them and watch them grow up, return to work. Travel. Being pregnant wasn't exactly something Naruko loved for herself. She loved her kids, but pregnancy made her feel vulnerable in a way she didn't quite like.

Besides, she loved being able to give her kids all the attention they demanded.

The boy definitely took after his mother he was incredibly patient with Mikoto and so very, very gentle in anything he did.

Mikoto was her father through and through. She was quiet and stern and Naruko had a feeling she'd end up a little snooty, too. But that was okay.

The years passed and they lived in relative peace. Surrounded by people they loved, as a family.

Naruko didn't cry all that often, but she did cry when Konohamaru took the hat ten years later and named her as his second.

Life was good.

Chapter End Notes

So, guess what? We're done. (YEAH!)

End Notes

Please Review! Knowing you took the time to tell me what you think about this, means a lot to me and is insanely motivating! :D

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!