

101 Words

Von BlueJey

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Kapitel 1: Connection, Sadness & Moment

Disclaimer: I do not own Naruto nor do I own it's characters. (As things are right now, I'm starting to think I should be glad, 'cause if I were Kishimoto, I'd drown myself in the dirtiest river I could find... The Naruto manga went completely down the drain.) I make no money with this.

Author's Note: Okay. Uh. I started this out of despair because I suck at writing multi-chapter fics... So I thought I'd try a oneshot-series and it turned out I liked it. So, here it is.^^

Edit: Actually, this is the second time I'm posting this story here, because some of the chapters are too short for Animexx' 150 words rule, so I'm going to throw three original chapters into one 'Mexx chapter... (Just had an epiphany.) Let's see how it works.....

Part 1 - Connection

Naruto and Sasuke were connected – everyone who knew them knew at least this much about them. It usually went unsaid, though sometimes, people – stupid people – felt a need to comment on it.

Sakura had once said if both Naruto and Sasuke only focused half of their attention on a fight, they would still win, for the very simple reason that two halves still made one whole.

Kiba had said it was amazing they were still both alive, for the very simple reason that every single thing they did turned into a fight.

Tsunade had said she had no idea how the heck they *managed*, for the very simple reason that they were complete opposites.

Ino had said that sometimes she wished she could hear the song to which they moved, for the very simple reason that it had to be an incredibly beautiful one.

Kakashi had said watching them interact was almost as amusing as watching one of his most favorite porn movies, for the very simple reason that their special kind of tension made everything they did seem like sex with their clothes on.

Sai had simply said he didn't understand them, for the very simple reason that they were beyond any kind of logic.

Naruto and Sasuke usually said those people were crazy. Then, they usually fought about *how* crazy.

Part 2 - Sadness

Sometimes, someone said something and Naruto's lips twitched and his eyes sparkled. Sasuke would realize he was remembering something and it made his heart tighten in his chest.

Sometimes, someone said something and Sasuke's lips twitched and his eyes looked into nowhere. Naruto would realize he was remembering something and it made his stomach churn.

It was moments like this when they realized how much of each other's lives they had actually missed. How much of their lives they had really spent apart. It had only been four years, but at times like this, it felt like so much more...

And it was times like this when Sasuke's face hardened with determination, because the only thing he could do now was try and fill the days they spent together with more of those pleasant memories that made Naruto smile when he remembered them. He couldn't turn back time and at times like this, he just felt sad.

And it was times like this when Naruto's face hardened with determination, because the only thing he could do now was try and fill the days they spent together with some of those pleasant memories that made Sasuke forget what nightmares he still remembered. He wished he could turn back time and at times like this, he felt just *sad*.

Part 3 - Moment

That day, the fight on the bridge. Sasuke's blood was on his hands and Haku's voice echoed through his head like thunder and he just couldn't believe this wasn't a dream. And time stood still.

That day, the fight in the Valley of the End. His rasengan clashed with Sasuke's chidori and even before the shockwave of the following explosion threw him back, he knew that he had lost this fight. And time stood still.

That day, the moment at Orochimaru's hideout. Sasuke's body radiated heat and even though it was barely noticeable, he knew that Sasuke was trembling just like him

while they secretly leaned against each other for one split second. And time stood still.

Today, a chance meeting at the Gate. Sasuke smirked as he walked past Naruto, who grinned back and promptly forgot he'd been in a conversation with Kiba until just now. The other members of their teams nodded to each other in greeting, but they only exchanged that look. And as soon as he was out of Sasuke's field of view, Naruto turned on his heels, grabbed him by the shoulder and spun him around before stealing a kiss that made Kiba gasp and Ino squeal. They parted with a grin and a smirk and time moved on.

Kapitel 2: Scream, Sunlight & Fall

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Author's Note: 'Scream' is a little bit darker than the first ones, but it's going to get lighter again. In fact, I want to show as many aspects of Sasuke and Naruto's relationship as possible with this, which is why there will be small scenes of almost all genres...

Part 4 - Scream

Naruto stared at him. It hurt – fuck, it really did – and he didn't know what to say, what to answer as Sasuke's glare burned into his heart.

Sparing my life will break your neck. – I have no reason to continue living. – You have no right to decide over my future. – Our 'bonds' have long since been severed. – You know nothing.

Did you really believe you could bring me back?

Sasuke wasn't shouting. In fact, his voice was almost quiet, without any kind of intonation or signs of life. His mask was close to perfect and Naruto wanted nothing more than to see behind it like he had seen behind it on the day the raven had left. Now that he was back, things had become so much more complicated...

Did you really believe you were strong enough?

He wasn't shouting. In fact, he was almost whispering.

"I know I am. You're here after all."

He wasn't even speaking anymore, but Naruto knew and always had known that inside, he was screaming.

Part 5 - Sunlight

Dawn... If he survived until dawn, he had a chance to make it back.

Sasuke's head spun and he knew he'd lost a dangerous amount of blood, but it didn't matter. It also no longer mattered that the mission had been a fucking trap. It wasn't important that he could barely feel his legs – as long as he could move them, everything was fine – or that one or two of his enemies had used poisoned weapons. If he survived until dawn, he had a chance to make it back. And he *had* to make it back – he had to survive until...

The branch beneath him gave in under his weight and he hit the floor before he could react. The impact alone was enough to almost knock him out and the pain that washed over his fogged mind made any coherent thought impossible. For seconds, or hours maybe, he just lay there, panting harshly.

He—he had to survive, make it back... If he could just survive until dawn, then—

"Sasuke!"

Someone kneeled down next to him and rolled him onto his side – his left side, because he vaguely remembered there was a broken arrow embedded into his right.

"Hey, bastard! Hang in there for fuck's sake!" He felt a light slap to the face, but it was too weak to really bring him back. "*Hey!* Look at me, asshole!" The last words were almost screamed into his face and he fought to open his eyes, move his lips, tell the fucker to shut up – he just had to survive until—

He blinked, vision blurry and eyes unfocused, only to find himself looking up at what could have been sunrise. Naruto smiled weakly, blue eyes wide with worry.

"Too bright..." Sasuke mumbled and turned his head away, only to hear Naruto laugh.

"It's just past midnight, bastard... It's pitch black around here!" But he had to be lying, because Sasuke could *see* the sunlight radiating from his eyes.

Part 6 - Fall

Every now and then, Naruto realized he was falling.

When he remembered the day he'd first met Sakura, beautiful, dangerous Sakura with her soft pink hair and incredibly green eyes, he remembered having fallen for her. It had been a hard fall and a painful way back up.

When he remembered the day he had first realized how *amazing* Konoha was, he inevitably remembered having fallen for Konoha as well. It was a nice feeling –

knowing that this fall would not end in pain, because every single day gave him a new reason to fall all over again.

But both Konoha and Sakura were falls he'd already taken – though he hadn't necessarily reached the ground yet. With Sasuke, it was something else entirely.

Falling for Sasuke wasn't like anything Naruto had ever felt before. It was like hitting the ground a thousand times and more and still being midair. It was like jumping off the edge without his feet leaving the ground every single time their eyes met. It was the pain of the impact and the weightlessness of the fall every minute they spent together. In short, it was breathtaking.

For Sasuke, Naruto was going to fall forever.

Kapitel 3: Promise, Reassurance & Sex

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Author's Note: Another (punch of) chapter(s). I hope you enjoy them. Part 8 - Reassurance is the first one that was lacking the last time I posted this and Part 9 - Sex is as tame as a newly born puppy, despite the title. I saved the smut for later... *grins*

Part 7 - Promise

Because it was important.

"I'll bring you back even if I have to break your arms and legs!" he yelled, the pain in his chest just half a heartbeat from exploding. Why couldn't Sasuke see?!

Because there was nothing *more* important.

"I'll bring him back, no matter what. I will not fail again, I promised." The pain in his chest was still there, still tearing him apart and burning what was left. It hurt like hell.

And because no one else could do it.

"If my arms get ripped off, I'll kick him to death. If my legs get ripped off, I'll bite him to death. If my head gets ripped off, I'll stare him to death. And if my eyes get ripped out, I'll just curse him to death. Even if it means getting torn to pieces, I'm going to bring Sasuke back from Orochimaru, no matter what!" It was almost enough to break his control, but what hurt the most – more than the pain itself – was that Sasuke didn't see.

Because it was what had kept him going even when his world had been in ruins.

"I told you I'd bring you back, bastard!" he yelled, but with a grin on his face. "It was a promise!"

"...took you long enough, though."

"Guess why, asshole!!" The pain was still there sometimes and it always would be. But it didn't hurt as much as it had back then anymore.

Because it had saved both of them.

Part 8 - Reassurance

"Sometimes, it still feels like it's a dream," Naruto admitted quietly, a content smile on his lips. "Like all of this is too good to be true and I'll wake up as soon as I forget it might not be real."

There was a moment of silence, broken only by their heavy breathing and slowly calming heartbeats.

"Moron," Sasuke answered, eyes fixed on the evening sky above their heads as they simply lay there in the grass and calmed down from their fight.

"Bastard," then, after a pause, "I'm serious, you know?"

"I almost hadn't noticed..."

"Stop being an asshole for *five minutes* and people might actually get to like you..."

"Hn," and a smirk and a grin and they went back to staring at the sky, understanding flowing easily between the lines.

Part 9 - Sex

They had been *fighting*.

Rolling around on the dusty ground of the training area, they had both been trying to overpower the other and gain the upper hand. The wild kisses and nips had only been their way of diverting the other. The soft moans and breathy gasps had only been camouflage to make the other think he had won. And the touches and gropes had been warnings to tell the other he was showing weakness! It had been a *fight!!*

Until Kakashi had appeared, of course. Now they were staring at him in horror, because someone like him would surely misunderstand.

Kakashi only smiled behind his mask and innocently nodded 'hello', admitting to himself that he would have been blushing now if he hadn't spent his entire life reading those lovely books he tended to keep in his pockets.

“Interesting fight,” he said, amusement audible in his voice.

Kapitel 4: Blindness

Disclaimer: I do not own Naruto nor do I own it's characters. I make no money with this.

Author's Note: This is the first 1000+ words chapter. Like I said in the summary, every 10th (original) chapter, meaning every 4th 'Mexx chapter, will be around this length, mostly because I had so many oneshots lying around which were to short to go as a stand-alone, but to precious to me to just put them away and forget about it. So yeah. *laughs sheepishly*

Part 10 - Blindness

'Old habits die hard'. Sasuke couldn't even remember how often he'd heard that line.

"You never learn, do you?" Naruto asked amusedly.

"Shut up," he growled back, waving his hand in front of his own eyes a few more times before closing them.

It had started a few minutes ago with colors losing their brightness, movements looking faster than they were supposed be, distances appearing shorter than they really were, objects slowly losing their focus. Of course, he hadn't payed it any attention at that time, because Naruto had been *laughing* at him – Sasuke just *knew* – and he would have looked ridiculous if he had stopped then. Now, all he saw was infinite blackness.

He was blind. *Again*. His eyes had totally given in under the constant abuse of him using his sharingan for way longer than it was originally designed to be used, Naruto forcing him to keep it activated for over half a day.

And while Sasuke wasn't *that* concerned anymore after he had learned that his eyesight would return after a while, Sakura would kill him, she really would. It was the second time in less than eight weeks and the strong-willed medic had made it perfectly clear that the more often it happened, the harder it was to cure it and the higher his chances of doing some *real*, serious damage were. And whatever people tended to say when he pissed them off, Sasuke knew that he was precious to Konoha because of his eyes.

"How comes this never happens on missions, bastard?" Naruto wanted to know from *behind him* and Sasuke mentally cursed himself. Naruto's movements were hard to follow even with the sharingan. It was close to impossible to follow them *now*. And

the asshole knew that perfectly well! "It only happens when we train."

Sasuke refused to answer to that – even if he wanted, he couldn't. The answer was something he wasn't ready to admit yet. After all, there had to be a better reason than 'only Naruto was strong enough to push him far enough for his eyes to overload'.

"It told you to shut up," he snapped into the direction where he assumed Naruto. The answering laugh came from behind him *again*, which was annoying. He *hated* that Naruto was able to move without him sensing it.

"Anyways, we made it quite far... It'll take a while to return to Konoha." Naruto said thoughtfully, completely ignoring Sasuke's poisonous glare. But he was right. It had been quite some time since they had left the training grounds, deciding that the grounds were just too small. So they had extended their training area towards the woods south-east of Konoha – the ones that were so dense that both shinobi and civilians avoided them like the rumors about the woods being haunted by ghosts were actually true... Here, they could train perfectly undisturbed and without having to worry about damaging things and persons that happened to be in the way. They had spent most of the day chasing each other back and forth through the whole area and Sasuke had no idea exactly how far from Konoha they were right now. "Can you walk?"

"It's my eyes, you moron. Not my legs." he snarled back.

And it wasn't even so much the fact that Naruto treated him like he was injured – Sasuke would never, *never* let himself be injured in a fight against the dobe! (Please ignore the actually not so few times it still happened, thank you very much...) – that irked him to no end, it was the fact that it had *happened*. He had ignored the warnings his body had given him, pushing himself past a certain limit that he had been ordered to keep away from and this was the result. It was his own fault that now left him blind and *helpless* without his most important sense.

"I'm just saying that the last time this happened to you, you tried to walk back on your own and you know Sakura almost skinned me alive when she saw you, right?"

"I can fucking take care of myself, moron. It's not my fault you can't protect yourself against a *medic*." Yes, Sasuke knew Naruto was right and he knew Sakura wasn't something – or rather someone – *he* was able to protect himself against, but the idiot actually being right was something that wasn't *allowed* to happen! Especially not when it made him look like an idiot himself.

"I'll just ignore you even *thought* of saying that and pretend you agreed with me. Now, here, take my hand, I'll guide you," Naruto replied in a voice dripping with sarcasm and Sasuke felt Naruto's warm hand slide into his own, a firm, yet gentle movement meant to ground him without startling him – because Naruto knew how Sasuke depended on his eyesight and how jumpy he was without it.

"I'm not going home *holding your hand!*" he still snapped, pulled his hand away and took a step back, swaying ever so slightly because it wasn't all that easy to keep his balance without seeing.

"Of course, I could always just knock you out and fucking *carry* you back, bastard!!"

"Just come here and try, you *moron!*"

"Don't act like I won't, 'cause I will if you don't shut up! No, wait. Why am I even arguing with you!? It's not like you could do anything, blind as you are!!"

And then, he knew that Naruto was right in front of him and *planning* something and the blond's hand landed on the back of his thighs, just below his ass, and pushed him forward, against Naruto, only that Naruto wasn't where Sasuke's hands shot up to brace himself against the blond's chest, but further down and it threw the raven off balance – and then he fell forward, arms flailing helplessly as he tried to hold onto something – *anything*, really. He toppled over and Naruto stood up and suddenly Sasuke found himself thrown over Naruto's shoulder, his hands fisting the back of the moron's shirt, his feet kicking air and Naruto's front.

"Fuck you!!" he yelled, hating the way his voice came out audibly higher than usual.

"Stop struggling, you fucker! You're breaking my ribs!!" Naruto yelled back and Sasuke punched him in the back, but tried to still his feet nevertheless – he'd already landed a pretty good hit on Naruto's ribs earlier that day and he knew that it still had to be tender.

"Put me down *right now!*" he demanded angrily, missing the way Naruto's posture changed beneath him as he readied himself for a jump. "I said *put me—Naruto!!!*" When Naruto pushed off the ground and took off into the treetops, starting to make his way into the general direction of Konoha, Sasuke couldn't suppress the surprised yelp nor could he stop himself from curling up around the blond, clinging to him, panicking. Being blind was bad enough, but Naruto had just taken his last connection to the ground and was *moving* now, and he couldn't say why it *scared him*, but it did – it simply did. "No, Naruto, really – put me down, okay? Put me down! Naruto, I mean it, just—"

"Fuck, Sasuke! Just trust me, okay!?" Naruto interrupted him, sounding pissed, but Sasuke felt that he slowed down. "I'm not gonna drop you or anything, bastard, so what the fuck is your problem!?"

Technically, Sasuke knew he was right, but...

"I-I can't see," he finally forced out when he managed to stop biting his tongue to keep from *screaming*, his forehead pressed against Naruto's back. His voice sounded strained, scared and he hated, *hated* it.

"I know that, asshole. *Trust me.*"

And whether it was his voice just then – warm and gentle – or the way he slowed down again – his movements becoming less abrupt and more flowing – or the way the hand that had been resting on his thigh until now suddenly started rubbing soothing

circles, Sasuke would never know, but *something* Naruto did that moment just *reached* Sasuke.

And it was enough to calm him down.

He was still blind for the time being and Naruto was still carrying him like a damn bag of cement, but it wasn't as bad anymore. He wasn't as scared anymore.

It was strange to trust someone as much as he trusted his own eyes.

Kapitel 5: Loyalty, Reflection & Love

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Author's Note: Back to shorter chapters. Part 12 - 'Reflection' was **partly** inspired by a friend... She said that if she were Sasuke, she wouldn't be able to look into the mirror anymore. (We were talking about certain [porny] pictures that she(/we) had found on the internet... *cough cough*) Part 13 - 'Love' was the chapter that I started with when I first had the idea of writing this whole thing. =D

Part 11 - Loyalty

Konoha had been Sasuke's home. He'd grown up there, he'd become a shinobi there, he'd made almost-friends there. Yet, in the end, Sasuke had betrayed Konoha and left.

Oto had never been Sasuke's home. He'd trained there, he'd become a criminal there, he'd kept his distance to everyone there. Still, in the end, Sasuke had betrayed Oto and left.

Kakashi had been his teacher. He'd taught him, he'd helped him and more than once, he'd saved him. Yet, it had been disgustingly easy to leave him behind.

Orochimaru had been his master. He'd taught him, he'd made him 'strong' and more than once, he'd made Sasuke want to kill him. Still, or maybe because of that, it had felt great to *finally* leave him behind.

Sasuke supposed loyalty had never been his strongest side.

But Naruto... Naruto was an idiot. He was loud, obnoxious, a burden... He was everything Sasuke couldn't stand. And still, after everything – after leaving his home, his teacher, his almost-friends – he hadn't been able to kill the moron. He hadn't been able to let go of him.

So Sasuke supposed he was just a little picky about who he chose to be loyal to...

Part 12 - Reflection

When Naruto looked into the mirror, he saw the face of a boy who had grown up being called 'monster'.

He saw the blue eyes that his friends called 'beautiful' and knew that none of them had any idea of how much pain azure could hide. He saw the whisker-like scars on his cheeks and remembered the fire on his skin when his inner demon broke free. He stared at his own lips and tried to forget the feeling of forcing a smile when all he wanted to do was cry.

Over the years, mirrors had kind of turned into his natural enemies. So Naruto avoided them, if possible.

And he had to admit that it honestly amazed him that Sasuke could spent so much time staring at his reflection, doing his hair or whatever it was that took him so goddamn long every *goddamn* morning. It *amazed* him.

That was, until the day he accidentally stumbled into the bathroom when Sasuke was inside and he'd understood that Sasuke wasn't doing his hair. He was *staring*. Staring without actually seeing, and for a split second, he'd caught a glimpse of what Sasuke saw in the mirror.

He saw the eyes that everyone was fascinated by and he knew that no one had any idea of how much they had seen. He saw the elegant form of his nose and the high cheekbones and remembered that he was the only one left with these typical Uchiha traits. Well, except, of course... And then he looked down at his hands and could imagine the blood Sasuke saw on them.

When Sasuke looked into the mirror, he saw the face of a boy who had grown up dead inside without even knowing.

Part 13 - Love

They fought, kicked and punched each other, aiming to surpass the other in every way possible, and still wasted most of their time insulting each other during training. They called that 'rivalry'.

They glared, frowned and scowled at each other, calling each other 'bastard' and 'moron', and spent most of their time bickering about totally insignificant things. They called that 'friendship'.

They fought their battles back to back, relying on each other's strength, and understood each other without words. They called that 'brotherhood'.

They did other things as well, but they didn't have a name for them. And they deftly refused to realize that their fangirls had one single word for all of that.

Kapitel 6: Comfort, Difference & Pride

Disclaimer: I do not own Naruto nor do I own it's characters. (Seriously, Kishimoto can keep them... *doesn't want Manga!Sasuke*) I make no money with this.

Author's Note: I'm so glad I actually have this story finished and lying around waiting to be posted, because I just made the 'mistake' of reading the manga chapters around the fight at the Valley of the End. (I was more of an anime watcher around that time.) And do you know what happened? I (**hopefully momentarily**) ruined my beloved NaruSasuNaru pairing for myself.*shocked beyond believe* Unbelievable, isn't it!?

Part 14 - Comfort

Naruto was having troubles breathing. It was like his lungs simply refused to fill with air, so every time he inhaled, it ended in a ragged pant.

The Kyuubi was still there, raging just beneath the surface, barely controlled by the seal on his stomach. It was enough to make his head spin, red tinging his vision. His hands were shaking, his whole body on the verge of giving in.

'Just a little longer,' he told himself. 'It'll go away soon!'

"Getting better?" Sasuke asked from behind him, voice calm and quiet, but Naruto felt his uncertainty in every minuscule shift of his posture.

"Yeah," he gasped and really, who would believe him if he sounded like he was about to pass out?

"Hn," was Sasuke's monosyllable reply and then, he added, "Moron," as if he'd just remembered it had to be said.

Naruto laughed breathlessly. Sometimes, a single word from Sasuke was worth more than a thousand hugs from someone else.

Part 15 - Difference

Sasuke knew that his eyes didn't betray many of his emotions. But whenever he was

angry or hurt – or turned on, for that matter – they would turn sharingan red, which was Naruto's nice way of saying they took the color of warm blood. He hated red.

Naruto's eyes, on the other hand, were incredibly expressive, mostly because he didn't put as much effort into hiding his emotions – along with the fact that they even existed – as Sasuke did. When it came to guessing Naruto's mood, all one had to do was look at his eyes and they would tell a story.

He'd seen just about everything in those eyes – from happiness to hurt to anger to hatred – and he was not proud of the fact that he had probably caused most of those emotions to show in Naruto's eyes at least once.

Naruto's eyes were a beautiful shade of blue, almost brighter than Konoha's summer sky, and though Sasuke was pretty sure it shouldn't be possible, he suspected them to change color in accordance with Naruto's mood. It also took a lot more to make Naruto's eyes redden and even when they did, there was one big difference to Sasuke's eyes.

Naruto's eyes didn't turn crimson. Naruto's eyes took the color of fire – hot and wild and untamed fire. Those times, he loved red.

Part 16 - Pride

One of the most significant differences between Sasuke and Naruto was that by now, everyone knew of the demon *Naruto* carried inside of him. They knew of the Kyuubi and its power – its importance. And they feared it, even though they had learned not to fear Naruto.

Only very few people could tell that Sasuke, too, was carrying such a demon.

It didn't have a physical form (though Sasuke could feel its claws just perfectly well at times) and it didn't change his appearance when it broke free (though Sasuke hoped he wasn't always scowling *this* much). But it was there nevertheless, whispering to him all the time.

It was there when Naruto was having fun and Sasuke wanted nothing more than to just join him, telling him, "*Remember who you are! You're an Uchiha!*" – it was there when he fought Naruto and knew that he was nearing his limits, hissing "*Remember who he is! You can't lose to someone like that!*" – it was there when Naruto was looming over him, all panted breaths and hot kisses, screeching "*Have you lost your mind?! How can you submit to him?!*"

It was just *there*, a dark, angry presence at the back of his mind. It was breaking him down, yet keeping him upright at the same time – because Uchiha didn't break down.

They were better than that. *He* was better than that.

It was a two-faced thing and Sasuke just didn't know how to fight it, was afraid of losing its power. And sometimes he was convinced that Naruto's was the easier opponent. At least the moron didn't have to fight against himself.

Kapitel 7: Dream, Beauty & Secret

Disclaimer: I do not own Naruto nor do I own it's characters. I make no money with this.

Author's Note: Okay, so. Uhm, as you might or might not have noticed, there is no specific chronological order to these. I just thought I'd explicitly tell you this, 'cause Part 17 - Dream is set very early and Sasuke is still pretty young.

And, uh, both Part 18 and 19 are ShounenAi, though 18 is pretty tame and yeah, but Part 19 might even be seen as yaoi, I think. Nothing grafic though, just vague references, which is why I didn't put his under 'adult'. I still thought I'd warn you. *smile*

Part 17 - Dream

It was everywhere, no matter where he looked.

It was pouring down from the sky and it was pouring from countless wounds on the savagely torn corpses, forming crimson puddles on the ground that seemed to crawl up his legs if he failed to sidestep them in his haste.

Sasuke was scared like he had never been before and all he wanted to do was curl up like a child and cry, because he was just so horribly afraid with all that blood everywhere.

Then he saw him. His red eyes were glowing with madness and his lips were twisted into a grin that he couldn't stop from burning into his memory.

'This can't be happening...'

And then, he woke up with his own scream ringing in his ears and his skin slick with sweat.

He waited until he managed to get his trembling body back under control before he stood and quickly got dressed. Ten minutes later found him in the training area beating up Orochimaru's favorite underlings because if he had time to dream shit like that, he obviously wasn't tired enough and still had some energy left.

That and he didn't want to start thinking about when his nightmares had stopped revolving around his past and Itachi.

Part 18 - Beauty

'Beauty' was a word that didn't hold much importance in Sasuke's life. In his opinion, it was a word that held little importance in general.

It described something that wasn't clearly defined, something subjective, something that everyone envisioned differently. It was also something that people tended to fight over quite a lot, which wasn't logical at all for all the mentioned reasons. But when had Naruto ever been logical?

So Sasuke really shouldn't be surprised when one day, he found himself pushed up against a wall with Naruto decidedly too close, and when would the idiot ever understand the concept of personal space?!

But before he could come up with a fitting insult to throw at him, Naruto leaned in even closer, that evil, *evil* grin on his face, and slowly licked at his pulse. His eyes were deep azure and *wild*, burning into Sasuke's, and for one moment, there was a single word that flashed through Sasuke's mind.

"You're beautiful," Naruto whispered huskily.

And from there on, it degraded into a meaningless fight over a word that was so illogically important that Sasuke had *sworn* to himself he would never get into an argument because of it. Yet, there he was.

Part 19 - Secret

Naruto loved the power he had over Sasuke.

He loved how he was the only one who ever saw that *different* side of Sasuke, how he was the only one who would ever be able to see that side of the bastard.

Naruto loved that Sasuke still fought him every single time, that he didn't just give in and submit. He loved that Sasuke *fought* – hands and feet and teeth – and he loved how Sasuke lost. He loved that Sasuke would still be fighting him the next time.

He loved how Sasuke glared up at him even when he was down on his knees – eyes hot red, the sharingan spinning so fast it was dizzying – and he loved how the raven's resistance broke when he fisted the hair at the back of his neck and *pushed* him forward, fingers brushing against his scalp until those *eyes* fluttered shut.

He loved how Sasuke could curse him and threaten him and still beg him in the same sentence, lips trembling while his eyes promised sweet pain. He loved that he could *make* Sasuke beg, even when the raven had barely enough time to breathe between his pants and moans and hoarse screams. He loved how his voice sounded then.

He loved how he – and only *he* – could bring Sasuke to the point where he would do just about everything Naruto asked of him. He loved that he could bring Sasuke to the point of tears or breathless laughter, that he could push him way past his limits and still know it wouldn't break him.

He loved that Sasuke would kill him if he ever told anyone.

Kapitel 8: Color

Disclaimer: I do not own Naruto nor do I own it's characters. I make no money with this.

Author's Note: Another 1000+ chapter, another rather homely scene. Though I have to say, I really don't imagine Naruto as someone who gets himself drunk very often. One, because I think that he doesn't have the time or patience for hangovers, and two, because I somehow have this notion that Naruto would have a very high tolerance for alcohol, thanks to the Kyuubi and all. Don't ask me where that came from... Oo

Part 20 - Color

"You're drunk," Sasuke dead-panned, his hair all tousled and sticking up in weird ways. He had that *look* on his face that made something in Naruto want to curl up and hide and act like it hadn't actually been *him* who had woken the raven, almost breaking down his front door with his erratic knocking. "Do you even know what time it is?"

"Do I look like I fuckin' care?" Naruto slurred, crossing the distance between them by simply falling forwards, for some strange reason very convinced that Sasuke would catch him. It mostly came as a surprise when he hit the floor face first, the space that Sasuke should have been occupying offering no resistance at all.

"It's just past two in the damn morning, you moron!!" the raven snapped, completely ignoring Naruto's groans and whines of pain. "And in case you forgot, I have a mission tomorrow! So if you would be as kind as to drag your sorry ass out of my fucking apartment, I would highly appreciate it!!"

"But Sas'keee... I came to see you!" From his spot on the ground, Naruto smiled up stupidly, his big, round eyes holding that glassy stare of drunkenness. "'Cause my head hurts and the world's not helping at all." He rolled onto his back, vaguely noticing that the Uchiha's doorstep wasn't very comfortable. He just couldn't find it in him to actually care. "I mean, I like bright colors 'n all, but they're just too much when I'm drunk and I told you my head hurts. I did, right?"

Sasuke eyed him suspiciously, then crouched down next to him, carefully staying just out of his reach. "What do you mean, bright colors?" he asked calmly, although slightly confused. Of course, the moron was drunk and probably not making any sense anyways, but it just sounded strange, hearing him talk of bright colors after he'd stumbled in in the middle of the fucking night.

Naruto blinked at him a few times, with that incredulous look on his face. Like he was actually questioning Sasuke's sanity for *not* knowing what he was talking about.

"The ones outside?" he then offered, turning his head to glance down the corridor that lead back to the stairwell. There was no light at all except the one from inside Sasuke's flat and for one brief moment, he wondered how Naruto had managed to actually get this far without waking every single person in the whole building. It was nearly pitch-black out there.

"I'm not saying you're stupid, Uzumaki – I assume you're already aware of that – but I really don't know what you're talking about."

"I'm saying they're too bright and they make my head hurt and I came to see you 'cause of that... Did you know that Kiba can't sing at all?" He giggled and Sasuke closed his eyes for a moment at the sudden change of topic, taking a deep breath. "He just keeps missing the—"

"Naruto." Calmly, slowly and in short sentences. If Naruto didn't feel the need to explain himself, he didn't feel the need to listen to him. "I need to sleep. Go home, alright?"

"But I told you—"

"Yes, you told me... You're not making any sense, so just piss off, please?"

"No, I wanna stay!!" And before the raven could react, Naruto was already in motion, leaping forward in an instant.

He tackled Sasuke around the middle, throwing him off balance and making him fall flat on his back, Naruto landing on top of him, and suddenly, Sasuke found himself with a lapful of drunken shinobi, the blond's face buried in the fabric of his loose shirt and his breath tickling the sensitive skin beneath – how the heck Naruto had managed to reach him when Sasuke had believed he'd placed himself *outside* the idiots reach, the raven didn't know. He sighed in exasperation.

"Get off me, moron!" he ordered, not surprised when Naruto violently shook his head, then pressed his face against Sasuke's stomach again. The guy could be such a child at times. Most of the times.

"Don' wanna," he mumbled, arms tightening around the Uchiha and Sasuke hissed when he touched a few bruises he'd left there during their sparing match about half a day ago. "It's all warm an' cozy here and you're here, too."

"Yes, I'm here..."

Now Sasuke wasn't a very peaceful person and usually, he wouldn't have any problems with using force to remove his drunken teammate from his home. But hitting Naruto *now* would only result in a fight, which would take time. And he was tired and Naruto was drunk, meaning it would be a loud fight and his neighbors would make his life a living hell the next days... He just wanted to sleep.

Thumping his head back against the floor, he stared up at the ceiling, frustration welling up inside him.

"Listen, idiot. How about the couch?" he finally offered, patting the blond's head awkwardly. "You still need to let me get my share of sleep, but I'll let you stay over, okay?"

"Awww..." Naruto sat up, the fact that his stupidly grinning face was now *above* Sasuke's slightly unnerving but bearable for now. "I like you!"

And then, he bent down, his lips brushing against the Uchiha's for only the smallest fracture of an instant before he was up on his feet and padding into the general direction of Sasuke's bedroom, scattering his clothes as he went.

Sasuke took another deep breath as he fought down the urge to either scream girlishly or blush girlishly, then slowly turned his head to stare at the door through which the blond had disappeared. Maybe Sakura was right – maybe he would make a good academy teacher. His patience was astounding these past months... He sighed.

Shaking his head, he stood as well, rubbing his neck as he followed Naruto's tracks, kicking the blond's abandoned shirt out of the way as he went. He almost smiled when he entered the room, finding Naruto on his stomach on the bed, wearing only his pants and one sock.

"You're like an untrained dog," he murmured softly, merely standing there and watching for a while until Naruto eventually rolled onto his back and sent him an unfocused, sleepy glare that looked nothing but incredibly cute.

"Don' be a prick, 'kay?" he slurred, waving at Sasuke with one hand. "You know I'd never kick you out of my bed, right?"

"Yes, I'm aware of that..." Sasuke replied, shaking his head once more and finally allowing himself a smile. "Fine, the bed then." This earned him one of the idiot's smiles in return, blue, half-lidded eyes sparkling with happiness.

"I love you so much," the blond stated contentedly, watching as the raven walked over and bent down to help him out of his pants and rid him of his second sock. "Though you're still a bastard sometimes..."

"I know."

Nudging Naruto aside so he could reach the blanket, he covered them both, feeling the moron snuggle up against him instantly. For a second or so, he was tempted to push him away, but knowing Naruto, it wouldn't be of much use anyway, so he settled for a warning growl.

"You know," Naruto started, "my head's better already... I told you being 'round you helps, right? 'Cause the color's outside are too bright 'n it's too loud, but you're always

calm and quiet. It's like you're all black 'n white... I really like you that way. You know?"

And for a minute or so, Sasuke just smiled, enjoying the warm, fuzzy feeling Naruto's words evoked in him, and listened to the blond's breath evening out as he fell asleep, before he slid an arm around his best friend-lover-whatnot. "Yeah, I think I know."

Kapitel 9: Rhythm, Pain & Uncertainty

Disclaimer: I do not own Naruto nor do I own it's characters. I make no money with this.

Author's Note: I'm an idiot for constantly forgetting about my maths tests. *crying* But anyways... Yea, Part 21 is also one of the oldest chapters of this, I think it was the third of fourth I wrote. Oo Oh sweet nostalgia... Part 22 is rather heavy on the 'undertones' *cough cough* I guess... Part 23 is, too, but in a sweeter, more likeable way. ^^" (One more of these and then, there'll be a whole bunch of more freely interpretable chapters...)

Warnings: Part 22 - Pain is borderline **yaoi**. *Borderline* because though it's not explicitly mentioned, they've still got their pants on. Yaoi for obvious reasons... So be warned.

Part 21 - Rhythm

Naruto and Sasuke had always had their very own way of moving.

In the past, this had mostly consisted of Naruto standing in Sasuke's way and - rarely - of Sasuke ending up in Naruto's. It had degraded into a fight between them rather than a fight against their enemies, which had lead to a few cases of very impressive confusion and chaos. But that was the past.

Nowadays, it was like a dance, a carefully trained choreography made up in the heat of the moment.

Naruto threw himself to the side, letting his kunai fly as Sasuke's shuriken cut through the air where the blond had been not half a second ago. Sasuke dodged a sword slash, then jumped back and aimed for a different opponent while his former one died with Naruto's kunai in his neck. Naruto laughed and ducked beneath a swing of Sasuke's sword that might as well have been aimed at him and another enemy dropped dead with his throat slit. Sasuke delivered a punch to his opponent's face and gracefully sidestepped Naruto's rasengan that sent the poor bastard flying.

It was their own rhythm, and while it made fighting *with* them almost impossible, it made fighting *against* them an innovative form of suicide.

Part 22 - Pain

"Fuck!" Sasuke gasped when his back collided with the hallway wall, pain erupting through his whole body. Naruto bit his neck and the raven's back arched, head hitting the wall with a loud 'thud'. "No, no, no, *no*...! Naruto—"

—it wasn't enough, not even close, not even—

"*Shut the fuck up, Sasuke!*" Naruto almost-yelled, vivid anger coloring his eyes a dark red. He thrust his hips forward against the raven's crotch, ignoring the pain he caused himself, earning a strangled cry from the Uchiha. He wasn't Sasuke's fucking *toy*.

"Naruto..." Sasuke begged, abused lips trembling even as he spoke, tears streaming down his face, but Naruto only glared at him – really *glared*. "Pleas—"

"No!!" the blond screamed right in his face and his next thrust was hard enough to push Sasuke up against the wall, the Uchiha's dark eyes widening impossibly as his feet left the ground.

"Oh fuck, fuck, *fuck!*" he gasped, tossing his head to the side. "God, *please*, Na— just— *Ah!*" Another forceful thrust had him shout, hands fisting the fabric of the blond's shirt until he felt the cloth tear.

—he was almost there, almost there, but it wasn't enough, not this, not in this way—

And then, Naruto sank his teeth into the Cursed Seal and Sasuke *screamed* as the world went white around him.

The raven was still a shuddering mess when Naruto let go of him and watched as the raven dropped to the floor like a puppet with its strings cut. He took a few deep breaths, his own pants way too tight, before he bent down to grab a fistful of black hair and forced the other's head up.

"If you *ever* ask me to fuck you again when all you want is the *pain*, I will *not* forgive you."

But more than his words, it was the expression on his honest face that told Sasuke he wasn't the only one hurting right then.

Part 23 - Uncertainty

Their first kiss had been somewhat not-so-much like what Sasuke had imagined his

first kiss to be.

He was a guy after all, and guys were *usually* supposed to kiss girls, and girls were *usually* supposed to be all shy and nervous when they were kissed, so no, his first kiss hadn't been what he had imagined.

Of course, *he* hadn't been shy or nervous or anything, but cool and composed.

He hadn't been trembling – okay, he had, but that had been because he'd been exhausted from their fight that day and plus, it had been fucking cold – and he hadn't stumbled over his own feet until Naruto had had him backed up against a wall.

He also hadn't grabbed Naruto's shoulder to keep his knees from giving in under him – he had *placed* his hand there to keep Naruto upright.

He hadn't been *moaning* – no matter what Naruto, the stupid, moronic *imbecile* said – and he hadn't been *panting* afterwards! It was all lies!

He'd just been a little surprised by how things had turned out to be. And, admittedly, by the fact that Naruto was one of those persons that could kiss your brain away.

Of course, no matter how much he struggled to keep his cool, Naruto still grinned at him whenever the topic came up and Sasuke had a feeling the asshole just *knew*.

Kapitel 10: Lie, Envy & Hurricane

Disclaimer: I do not own Naruto nor do I own it's characters. I make no money with this.

Author's Note: For some reason, I really like Part 24. oO" Which is strange considering that I pretty much hated it when I wrote it. But whatever... Part 25 is a little like what I think the world would be if Sasuke and Naruto had actually grown up together, if Sasuke hadn't left or if he had returned when they met again after three years. Naruto's starting to turn into a real shinobi and Sasuke only has his sharingan to keep up with him. Sasuke wouldn't take that too well, would he? Part 26 is, again, purely Sasuke and Naruto... But mostly very naruto-ish. ^^"

Part 24 - Lie

"I hate you," Sasuke panted, red eyes spinning wildly, the shadow of a grin dancing over his features, and Naruto decided for the n-th time that he was drop-dead gorgeous like that.

"I know," he answered, voice barely more than a whisper. Licking his lips, he slid into a more aggressive stance, knowing that Sasuke was *anticipating* his attack with every fibre of his being.

"You hate me so much you can't think about anything else," he said, keeping himself perfectly still even as his mind screamed at him to just *strike now*. He loved how Sasuke's eyes moved faster, nervous.

"You hate me so much you wake up with my name on your lips."

He could see the shiver running down Sasuke's spine in the way his hands twitched.

"You hate me so much you can't walk past me without staring at me."

He clicked his fingers, satisfied when the raven jumped, then quickly reassumed his stance, a scowl on his face. Sasuke hated the unknown, hated not knowing what was to come, and Naruto was pushing it.

"You hate me so much it gives you goose bumps when I'm around," Naruto continued, a feral grin spreading across his face, "You hate me so much you can't control it, right, *Sasuke?*"

When Naruto finally tackled him, Sasuke's reaction was just a tad too slow, giving the

blond all the time he needed to gain the upper hand.

"I *hate* you!" he snarled, struggling against Naruto even as the blond leaned in to whisper into his ear.

"You're *lying*, Sasuke."

Part 25 - Envy

It always felt like everything was so easy for Naruto.

Sasuke watched as blue eyes stared for a moment, confusion giving the tanned, handsome face a touch of innocence. Then, brows rose, forming that small wrinkle on Naruto's forehead, while his tongue darted out to lick his lips. It was concentration, and Sasuke knew it, yet he played it off as stupidity.

"Don't sprain your brain," he mocked, hating the way it came off so much sharper than he had intended. Naruto's eyes flickered into his direction, his concentration wavering for a split second and Sasuke turned and left, fully aware of the knowing look Kakashi threw at his retreating back. Behind him, Naruto shrugged and went back to figuring out the jutsu their teacher had just shown him. Sasuke was still in earshot when things fell into place for him and he laughed, his hands already flying through the necessary seals to perform the jutsu.

It always felt like everything was so easy for Naruto. It always felt like Sasuke had to play dirty just to keep up with him.

Part 26 - Hurricane

The day started exactly the way Sasuke loved it – with a beautifully calm morning, the birds singing in the trees, the white, puffy clouds wandering from one horizon to the other in relaxed laziness. God, having the day off felt *great*...

He got out of bed around nine, took a hot bath until he felt like he couldn't stay in any longer without melting, then dried off. He wrapped the towel around his waist, too lazy to go and see if he even possessed something like *comfortable* pants, and went down to make himself breakfast. Or lunch. Something in between.

It was just a few minutes past eleven when he sat down at his kitchen table, still

drowsy and dazed from his bath and the unnaturally huge amount of sleep he'd gotten the last night, and started poking at his omelette. And suddenly—

"SASUKEEE!! Sasuke? Where—ah, there you are!! What'cha eating? Eww, gross... But anyways – Sakura's got the day off, too, and Kiba and Shino just got back last night – which means they're free until tomorrow 'cause... Hey, are you listening? Teme! Listen! The weather's so nice and we thought hey, why not go visit that lake we found last month – you remember, right? It's only one hour or so from here and we might not get a chance like this again! So, we're, uh, leavingintenminutes? I already told them you're coming along, so you better hurry up!"

Sasuke could only wonder how the fuck a person like him managed to cope with someone like Naruto. The guy was like a fucking whirlwind.

Kapitel 11: Bastard, Friendship & Fire

Disclaimer: I do not own Naruto nor do I own it's characters. I make no money with this.

Author's Note: Somewhat random, but hey, I'm trying not to bore you. ;D The slightest SA-warning imaginable for Part 27 -- it's there, yes, but really, just barely. xP The two other parts are kind of self-explanatory, I guess. So that's that.

Part 27 - Bastard

Really, Sasuke was one prickly bastard. That was a fact. And Naruto failed royally at getting used to it – Sakura could lecture him all she wanted, she wasn't the one at the receiving end of Sasuke's general assholiness.

In the past, Sasuke had at least been an asshole for certain reasons. One, he'd wanted to keep people at arm's length, two, there had been a time when his vehement dislike of Naruto hadn't been faked – not a long time, only a few seconds every now and then, but who cared? – and three, he'd been young and inexperienced and utterly incapable of dealing with his own emotions. Sucky reasons, yes, but *reasons*.

Nowadays, he was just being an asshole for the fucking sake of *being an asshole...!*

They were kind of *seeing* each other – what sane person would spent the better part of the whole day thinking up insults for the person they were fucking!? What made Sasuke's attitude even more incomprehensible was the fact that they weren't *only* fucking – Naruto *knew* Sasuke loved him in his own (sometimes not quite so logical) way. Why was he still so bent on making Naruto kick his face in?

Naruto didn't get it. But that wasn't something he would be losing sleep over – what made him scratch his head and *wonder* was the fact that while he still hit the roof every time Sasuke crossed The Line, it didn't bother him anymore. Not much, at least.

What sane person got goose bumps from hearing his kind-of-lover throw insults at them!?

Part 28 - Friendship

Naruto knew friendship wasn't something clearly defined.

With Sakura, friendship meant listening to each other, helping each other in every way possible. It meant cuddling and teasing each other about things no one else would be allowed to even talk about. It meant spending nights sleepless because of the other, worrying about them, and it meant talking over the phone for hours on end.

With Sakura, friendship was calm and quiet and filled with soft laughter and gentle smiles.

With Kiba, friendship meant sitting together, drinking beer that they technically weren't even allowed to buy yet. It meant talking about everything and nothing, meant honesty and devotion, meant punches to the shoulder or slaps across the head. It meant laughing about jokes that weren't even funny and watching films that they shouldn't spend their money on.

With Kiba, friendship was loud and restless and full of barking laughter and head-splitting grins.

With Shikamaru or Neji, friendship meant letting them enjoy their peace most of the time and occasionally emptying a bucket of cold water over their heads or something equally brainless. With Kakashi, friendship meant stealing one of his books once in a while and then reading it out aloud in front of his new genin team. With Konohamaru, friendship meant teaching him useless and not so useless jutsu to impress his other friends with. With Hinata, friendship meant letting her watch him and poking her whenever he had the chance. With everyone else, friendship was different yet again.

With Sasuke, friendship was the thing that kept him from ripping his head off whenever he was being too much of a jerk. It also kept him from jumping him in public whenever he wasn't.

Part 29 - Fire

Sasuke's face was completely blank as he watched the single drop of blood run down the edge of his kunai to gather at the tip, then drip to the floor after a moment. The small, almost inaudible sound of the impact echoed though his head like thunder.

Across the room, the single candle on his night stand wavered. For an instant, it almost seemed like the darkness would win and swallow the tiny flame, but a flame never died without a reason. It kept fighting its hopeless fight against the shadows filling the room.

He blinked, then slowly tipped his head to the side, inspected the cuts on his wrist

with detached fascination.

On his pale skin, the blood looked darker – thin lines of almost black liquid reflecting the warm light of the candle flame. It burned, pain buzzing up and down his arm with every heartbeat, but it probably wouldn't kill him. He was fairly sure it would heal before he bled to death.

He sighed, the candle wavering again, and simply dropped the kunai.

That one candle was nowhere even close to being strong enough to actually *lighten up* the room. But Sasuke didn't want the light.

He wanted the fire.

He *needed* the fire, just like he needed the pain, needed to feel he was still alive. He needed to know he was still here and able to fight on.

Sasuke needed to burn, because he needed to know he was still able to be like that candle, giving off *fire* when his *light* was too weak.

Kapitel 12: Warmth

Disclaimer: I do not own Naruto nor do I own it's characters. I make no money with this.

Author's Note: Making up for my two weeks absence. xD Though this is the last one for today. There is also not so much to say to this, so I'll just leave it at this and wish you all a good night, day, week, depending on when you read this. Oo Have fun and enjoy.^^

Part 30 - Warmth

"I just wasted another precious hour of my life," Kiba growled sulkily, sliding down the railing he'd been leaning against until he was sitting on the floor, with his knees drawn up to his chest. "What's taking them so long!?"

Naruto just smiled, keeping his eyes on the entrance of the restaurant across the street.

"You're just jealous," he mumbled, half-hoping the other wouldn't catch it.

"Oh, yeah, right." Kiba glared up at him and Naruto had to refrain from patting his head. The guy spent too much time with his dog... "'Cause I'd want to be down there talking to the bastard for what, three hours?"

Naruto grinned. It wasn't like he blamed Kiba for his bad mood. It was freaking *hot* up here, on the flat roof of whatever building they were on, and they'd been waiting here for *hours* while Shikamaru and Neji were being treated for lunch.

"At least no one's tried to kill us yet."

"Fuck you, Uzumaki."

"Love you too, darling."

Their mission was basically an easy one: meet up with this guy that had been acting as an informant for Konoha for a few years now and get as much information from him as humanly possible. Naruto hadn't bothered asking why it was necessary to send out a four-man cell for just that, and as soon as they had arrived, the question had kind of answered itself.

The guy was freaking nuts. And that was probably still one hell of an

understatement...

He had not only hired a whole group of sword-swinging criminals to kill them – which he had sworn had just been a test of their abilities to protect him for the time being – and then poisoned their food when they had come out of the ensuing brawl victorious – which had just been a precautious measure in case they weren't as trustworthy as he hoped – he had also refused to give them any information at all after Kiba had more or less exploded on him when the beds he had offered them had turned out to be lethal traps.

After that, Shikamaru and Neji had decided to keep both Kiba *and* Naruto away from him.

Which was why they were now stuck with watching the restaurant their informant had chosen as the place for their final meeting from afar. But Naruto was an optimistic person by nature: at least they had a nice view of the village from up here.

"You know, maybe I'll sneak out of the inn tonight," Kiba suddenly said thoughtfully, making Naruto turn to him and raise an eyebrow. "I could always just hide some snakes in his bed or, I don't know, pay someone to pour acid into his pants..."

At that, Naruto laughed, knowing that his friend was about as serious about this as he was about finding out Tsunade's cup size one day. Which was not very serious at all.

"How about detonating a paint bomb in his room?" he offered, turning to look back down at the street below. "Or dying his hair pink while—"

And then, he saw it.

It was just a subtle movement in the dark of a small alleyway, but Naruto's eyes were trained to catch even the smallest detail. And the frame of the person that was leaning against the wall down there, almost perfectly hidden by the darkness, the posture, the way that person shifted was all the detail Naruto needed in that moment.

Sasuke.

"Oh fuck," Kiba breathed, suddenly standing right next to him, seeing what he saw. "Naruto, I swear, if you do anything stupid—"

"I won't."

And with that, he spun around and crossed the roof in less than two seconds, jumping down into a shady, deserted side street. He knew that he couldn't do anything big – there were too many people around here and Shikamaru had *told* them to stay down and not do anything that would attract attention. But still, he had to... at least *see* him. It *had* to be fate...!

Ignoring the way Kiba cursed him, he dashed out onto the main street, barely avoiding

slamming into a girl about his age. She shouted something after him, but he couldn't bring himself to care. Another three or four almost-collisions later, he ducked into the alleyway, bending down and practically ripping his weapons pouch off his leg before his eyes had even started adjusting to the sudden darkness. He dropped it to the floor without as much as a second thought, then stripped out of his orange jacket, dropping it as well.

The alleyway was empty. But Naruto knew better than to think Sasuke had just disappeared like that. He was watching – Naruto could practically *feel* his eyes on him. And as Sasuke was watching, he was also getting the message.

No weapons, no fight. For now, that was all Naruto could offer.

Stepping over his stuff, he quickly made his way to the other end of the alley. From there, he followed his intuition and turned left, entering another alley, even smaller than the first one.

It was thrilling, in a way. He could feel the other's presence with every fibre of his body. His heart was beating in his throat and his skin was tingling with excitement. They hadn't seen each other in *months*.

He had made it about half the way down the alley when the tip of Sasuke's sword touched his bare neck.

"You're a moron," the other growled, more than obviously pissed. It made Naruto grin so wide that his cheeks hurt.

"Hello to you, too," he replied, turning around almost carelessly, raising both hands in mock-submission.

Sasuke looked older than the last time and his hair was a little shorter than Naruto remembered. His voice had darkened somewhat, sounding more mature now. He might have gained a few inches in height as well, but Naruto wasn't so sure. Last time, he hadn't exactly had the time to look at him as closely as he could look at him now.

"I don't have time for you," Sasuke mumbled darkly, threateningly, but he lowered his katana, putting it back into its sheath after a few seconds.

"You're here nevertheless."

"Give me one reason to let you live." He sounded more frustrated than anything else and Naruto's grin softened into a warm smile.

"It's summer, you know?" he informed him, thrusting his hands into his pant pockets in a gesture of lazy trust.

At that, Sasuke tensed visibly, eyes widening even so slightly, before his face clouded even more.

"You're an idiot," he forced out after a few heartbeats of silence, and then he turned on his heels and started to walk away – not exactly slowly, but not too hurriedly either. Naruto only smirked and called after him.

"Happy birthday, sunshine."

It had to be fate, it simply *had* to be.

Kapitel 13: Dialogue, Memory & Laugh

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Author's Note: Every now and then, I realize that I can't let go of facts that I believed to be true at one point, only to learn that they are, in fact, wrong. The scene at the Valley of the End, for example. Back when I watched those episodes, I read a fanfic implying that Sasuke's hand went through Naruto's heart, and not his lung. If you think it over logically, it's impossible, and I know that. Still, I can't get it out of my head... *headdesks* So, if you could forgive my stupidity, I'd really appreciate it. *glares at part 32*

Part 31 - Dialogue

The mission had been a joke, and a bad one too.

"B-rank my ass!" Naruto cursed, wiping the blood off his katana before he put it back into its sheath, fastening it onto his back where it belonged. "That was barely still A-rank!"

"Hn," Sasuke answered, taking a last calm glance at their surroundings as the sharingan slowly faded in his eyes.

"Fucking morons..."

"Hn."

"Really, I mean it can't be that hard to actually check who they send us after before doing it! *B-rank!*!" Throwing his hands up, he stomped over to one of the bodies, rolling it over with his foot. "There! Look at that!"

Raising an eyebrow, Sasuke sauntered over to do as told.

"This guy's listed as S-class in the Bingo Book. And he's been for a while now, I know that by chance."

"Hn."

"Moronic idiots! I'm so gonna kick some ass when we get home! It's the third fucking time something like this happens to me! Fucking new guys in the office or something..."

Sasuke merely shrugged. "Hn."

"...you really are one emotionless bastard," Naruto mumbled as he calmed down, giving him the *look*.

A, "Hn," and a smirk.

"Asshole." A grin. "So, two days until we reach the border, another one 'til we get home. Any plans?" he said as he bent down and grabbed the body by the ankle, dragging him over to where most of the others were rather carelessly. Sasuke followed him, pulling an empty scroll from his backpack.

Naruto watched him as Sasuke quickly painted the necessary seal, then he started collecting the corpses and gathered them on the scroll that Sasuke had placed neatly on the floor, all the while complaining about how it wasn't right to send someone on missions that they weren't properly informed about.

It was only after the bodies were safely sealed inside the scroll that he turned towards the raven, frowning.

"You're awfully talkative today, you know that?"

Sasuke only smirked in reply and deliberately hn'd.

Part 32 - Memory

Sasuke knew he had a lot of scars for his age.

There were the thin lines on his arms and legs where Orochimaru's sword had cut him during training, the even thinner lines on the insides of his wrist – the reason he still always wore his arm guards.

The scar on his back where Orochimaru had managed to almost kill him in their last fight, just before Naruto had practically torn the fucker to pieces.

The scar on his left upper thigh where he'd been stabbed with a katana, that time when Sakura had almost been killed.

The scar on his left arm from the burns when he had once been hit by one of the Kyuubi's chakra tails.

The small scar on his shoulder where that arrow had embedded itself into his flesh and Naruto had refused to pull it out until they were home.

And the scarred claw marks on his hips from *that time*, when... well, just that time.

There were also a lot of other, smaller ones, because Sasuke's skin simply scarred unnaturally easy.

Naruto's, on the opposite, didn't scar. It never had. Not the time when Iwa had gotten their hands on him, not the time when Orochimaru had tried to slice him to pieces, not the time when he'd thrown himself between Kakashi and that explosive tag, not the time when he'd had his throat slit, not the many times when the Kyuubi had burned him from the inside.

No matter what he went through, Naruto's skin always stayed perfectly unmarred.

Except, of course, that patch of skin above his heart.

Part 33 - Laugh

Naruto knew it wasn't *that* funny.

It had been a fight like most of their other fights – a stupid argument over whatever had seemed like a good enough excuse at that time that had quickly turned into something bigger and more dangerous. Naruto never clearly remembered what had lead to what afterwards. This time, however, they kind of hadn't managed to make it to the training grounds and he still had only a vague idea of where they were...

He didn't know what *exactly* had happened, but somewhere between dodging one of Naruto punches and trying to kick the blond's stomach, Sasuke had lost his balance or slipped on the muddy ground or god knows what. Naruto just knew that one second, he'd been there and the next, he'd been sitting in the small rivulet that neither of them had really paid attention to before.

It wasn't the fact that Sasuke – Uchiha Sasuke and *not* Uzumaki Naruto – had ended up falling into the water (nor was it the fact that he'd managed to get himself completely wet when the water was barely deep enough to cover his thighs now that he was sitting in it) that had Naruto toppling over, laughing so hard his stomach hurt and tears ran down his face.

It was the way he *looked*, sharingan red eyes wide with shock, lips slightly parted, cheeks flushed. It was much more than Naruto could take...

Several minutes later had him gasping and panting on the ground, because he just couldn't *breathe* he was so busy laughing. When he finally managed to get his body back under control, he looked up just in time to catch Sasuke erase the last reminders

of what could have been a grin.

And Naruto knew Sasuke well enough to translate a grin into a full-blown laugh.

Kapitel 14: Truth, Darkness & Trust

Disclaimer: I do not own Naruto nor do I own it's characters. I make no money with this.

Author's Note: [Spoiler alert for my ranting...] Yesterday, I made the mistake of reading the latest Manga chapters, meaning chapters 510 and onwards. And it's official now: I'm done taking that Manga for serious... Honestly, what the HELL!? Is Kishimoto fucking going crazy or something?! Joint army, okay. That part was okay. But Madara's totally overpowered little private force has GOT to be a joke, right? *Right?* Please, tell me he's not serious about that punch of shit... *gloweres spitefully* I feel just about ready to murder someone, seriously...

About these parts: Part 34 is, well... I really like the idea, but it didn't turn out quite the way I wanted it. =/ Part 35 is dark, I guess. But I see hints in the Manga, no kidding. xD *giggles manically* Part 36 is, again, more hopeful. It all comes down to the title. ^^

Part 34 - Truth

Naruto knew what people said. He was aware of how they talked about him and Sasuke. More than that, he was aware of how they thought about the two of them.

Even he couldn't pretend to be deaf enough not to hear when people whispered behind his back, words like 'demon', 'traitor' and 'broken' making their way to the blond's ears easily. He'd learned to cope with that, to ignore it as he walked past.

But that didn't change the fact that each time again, it stung.

And no matter how wrong their reasoning, they were still right about one thing. Both he and Sasuke were broken.

He'd even go as far as to say they were both fucked up beyond repair. They'd both lost and buried pieces of their souls, some of them left behind in order to gain something else, some of them ripped out by a world that never cared to *care*.

There was no way he'd ever get rid of the memories of what his life had used to be like *before* Team 7 – they would always be inside him, along with the knowledge that he never even got the chance to become someone else. The Kyuubi's fire would always continue to burn him up from the inside, too.

And he knew that Sasuke would never regain what Itachi had taken from him, that the

person the younger Sasuke could have become had died with the rest of the Uchiha Clan. He also knew that Sasuke would never get rid of his nightmares, be it the ones of *that* night or the ones of *other* nights that they both pretended Naruto didn't know about.

Naruto had learned not to react to people talking about them like they knew all those things, like they knew of the *pain* they'd gone through. Like they actually understood what Sasuke had done to himself when he'd betrayed his Village or what Naruto had endured over the years of growing up to become the Village's hero.

It was easier that way.

Part 35 - Darkness

Sasuke knew that ANBU was killing Naruto.

It was on nights when the blond came home all weary and exhausted from one of his missions that Sasuke became aware of this with startling clarity. And it were those nights, when Naruto entered their home and Sasuke wasn't looking at *him*, but looking at Konoha's infamous Red Demon Fox, that made him hate their ugly ninja world all over again.

He hated this world for changing Naruto – for *forcing Naruto to change*. He hated it for being the place it was, all dark and dirty and blood-thirsty. He hated it for being loved by Naruto so much that the idiot would put himself through hell just to save it from itself.

It had hurt to see Naruto realize how much there really was to change to make the world a better place and it had hurt to see Naruto struggle to not lose hope. In the end, Naruto had pulled himself back up and went back to fighting for his dream, his eyes still burning with determination and his words still promising a *future*. But Sasuke knew him well enough to see that something inside Naruto had been torn apart.

He knew that even if Naruto told himself that ANBU was necessary, that it was for the Villages safety, he was choking on his burden, strangled by the pressure, silenced by his own ideals.

And in a strange, twisted way, it were always Naruto's smiles – the unfaked, honest ones – that made him realize that all of Naruto's light couldn't protect him from the dark.

It was just that Naruto was too stubborn to give in to anything like that.

Part 36 - Trust

"I never doubted you'd survive," Sasuke stated calmly as he entered the small underground prison cell, sliding his ANBU mask off his face.

Naruto smiled up at him genuinely, exhaustion and the lack of sleep painting dark shadows across his face. He was kneeling at the center of the cell with his arms tied behind his back, wearing nothing but his black jounin pants. His face was graced by bruises, his bare torso covered in cuts, whip marks and burns – a few of them would surely leave scars on someone – anyone – else, Sasuke mused. But they both knew he was lucky: he wasn't missing body parts and he wasn't a mental wreck. He'd endured things way worse than this.

"You sure took your time," the blond said quietly, his eyes never leaving Sasuke's.

"I went against three or four direct orders, but Tsunade will forgive me once you're back home." They stared at each other in silence for a while until Naruto's expression turned into one of almost-sadness.

"You know," he said barely loud enough for Sasuke to hear, "I was supposed to kill myself the moment I realized there was no getting out of there..."

"Well, good thing that following orders was never one of your strong sides." Naruto didn't even flinch when Sasuke moved closer, drawing his kunai, and started working on the ties with swift movements. "It would have sucked to find you dead."

"Maa... I just couldn't bring myself to do it. I would have felt bad for making you come all the way for nothing."

"...You never doubted I'd come back."

Kapitel 15: Control, Failure & Night

Disclaimer: I do not own Naruto nor do I own it's characters. I make no money with this.

Author's Note: (I'm posting several chapters today, too, because I kind of want to get this over with -- I don't know how often I manage to get to a computer these next days... >.<)

Anyways, Part 37 is kind of the counter piece to Part 19 - Secret. Those two were meant to be one, but I couldn't bring myself to shorten it down that radically. Part 38 is just-- Sasuke, in a way. Oo Really, just *Sasuke*... And last but not least, Part 39 was written in my last exam period, so I really know what I'm talking about... *laughs*

Part 37 - Control

Naruto knew of the power Sasuke had over him.

He knew that Sasuke was the one in control, knew it even when he had the Uchiha pinned to the ground, dominating purely by physical strength. He knew that it was Sasuke who held the strings – that it was Sasuke who was in control even when he was helplessly caught in Naruto's grip.

One word.

That was all it would take. One single word that told him to back off, to let go, to piss off and never come back, and he'd be gone. One single word said like Sasuke *meant* it and Naruto would obey.

One word.

That was all it would take to break Naruto's neck when Sasuke's arms were trapped, to stab his heart when there was no knife, to slit his throat and rip his soul out. One single word. And Naruto would do anything. Live, die, anything.

Just one goddamn word.

And sometimes, it scared him. Knowing what Sasuke could do to him, what he could *make* him do. It was frightening, being controllable like that. Knowing that he would rip himself apart without hesitation.

Other times, it simply amused him. Because no matter how Sasuke struggled, he never fought to kill, and no matter how much he cursed, he never told him to stop like

he really meant it.

Naruto knew of the power Sasuke had over him. But he'd rather bite off his own tongue than tell the bastard...

Part 38 - Failure

Sasuke had grown up with the one and only goal of avenging his clan.

He'd been hunting Itachi – or at least planning to do so – ever since the bastard had murdered their entire family, but in the end, Itachi had died with a smile on his bloody lips and Sasuke had been left with the difficult task of completely reorganizing his plans and beliefs, regret, hatred and plain insanity gnawing at him with razor sharp teeth.

He had almost been at the point of no return, he supposed, with his new plan to kill the ones responsible for Itachi's suffering and the Uchiha Massacre, but once again, things hadn't exactly worked out the way he'd planned it. The damn bastards had died of *age* before he had even managed to get *close* to killing them and he'd been forced to reconsider yet again – though he wouldn't really complain about that anymore. It had kind of saved his ass, after all.

Naruto laughed all of that off as bad luck, but Sasuke couldn't help but realize that his life up to now could pretty much be summed up in one word: failure. And he didn't like the taste of that one bit. So he'd found himself a new goal: the *recreation* of his clan. And at first, he'd been pretty fucking proud of himself for finding himself a hobby that did, for a change, not involve fucking himself up by trying to kill people a little too far out of his league.

But then, he had ended up with Naruto's lips on his and Naruto's hands down his pants, and really, all this changing plans and resetting goals was slowly but surely starting to annoy him, because fuck! How the heck was he supposed to revive his damn clan when Naruto was looming over him like the incarnation of doom whenever one of the girls even tried to get close to him!?

Again, Naruto only laughed it off as bad luck, but Sasuke was fairly convinced that his laugh was a tad more *smug* now than it had been before...

Part 39 - Night

"Seriously, Sasuke, this is it," Naruto forced out, sliding down the tree until he was sitting on the ground, knees drawn to his chest, arms hanging loosely by his sides. "I'm dying."

"Don't be stupid, moron," Sasuke replied tonelessly, rubbing his eyes.

"I'm serious, bastard!" Naruto threw back in a breathless laugh. "I'm practically dead already."

"Don't exaggerate. You've been through things way worse than this."

"No. No, I haven't." He took a deep breath, smiling up at Sasuke tiredly. "I can't even bring myself to be depressed anymore..."

"Don't... Just get back up, okay?" Sasuke said in exasperation, hating Naruto for forcing him to stop. Stopping only made him realize how much he felt like Naruto claimed to feel. "Another day, maybe two and we'll be home and then, we'll take a fucking week off..."

"Fuck that. I'm not getting out of bed for at least a month..." the blond breathed, the shadow of a grin ghosting over his features.

"Yeah..." Shaking his head a few times, Sasuke tried to focus again. "But we need to get going again."

"Ah." And with that, Naruto got back to his feet, a certain look of *longing* on his tanned face. "I never truly realized how much I love sleep..."

And Sasuke agreed. One never knew to appreciate something as natural as *sleep* right until one had to survive without it.

Kapitel 16: Intensity

[Dieses Kapitel ist nur Volljährigen zugänglich]

Kapitel 17: Choice, Thought & Order

Disclaimer: I do not own Naruto nor do I own it's characters. I make no money with this.

Author's Note: This one is a set of some of my absolute favorites, if I may say so myself... Part 41 is basically just about making decisions - the right ones, hopefully - but when I wrote it, I just started to like it more and more... I actually considered turning this into a stand-alone, because I like the setting that I had in mind... Though I'm afraid most of that never made it into the short version.x) Part 42 is something that just plopped into my head and stayed and in the end, I really like how it turned out. And Part 43 is another take at what might have changed in their relationship if they had continued to work their way up together. For whatever reason, when I imagine older versions of our two 'heroes' (*cough cough*) on the same team, Naruto gets to be captain. =/ Call me crazy, for I probably am... x)

Part 41 - Choice

She was young, around ten maybe, and not exactly a beauty. In fact, there was nothing notably special about her at all – she was just another one of the countless kids that this city had forsaken.

And Sasuke had really seen enough orphans to not even look at her twice at first – sad as it might be, there was nothing he could do. But when the man approached her, bending down to whisper something to her, Sasuke did watch them from the corner of his eye.

He watched as she blushed furiously under the layer of dirt that covered her face, then watched as her eyes widened in sudden understanding and her expression wavered between helpless anger and reluctant resignation for a few seconds.

Sasuke didn't have to hear what the man said; it was pretty much clear from the girl's reaction.

When the man grabbed her arm and urged her to follow him, she didn't fight it, staring at the ground with a mixture of self-loathing and general disgust, her light blue eyes filling with tears of rage. Sasuke decided to look away again, chose to ignore how the man pulled her into a dark, shady alleyway across the street.

'None of your business', he told himself, trying to choke the sickening feeling of guilt rising from his stomach.

Sacrificing the success of a mission that could save dozens of lives for the sake of just one child? He swallowed heavily, forcing himself to concentrate on their target instead, forcing himself to ignore the small voice in his head that told him his choice was wrong...

"Uzumaki!!" their ANBU captain suddenly hissed angrily and Sasuke turned his head just in time to see Naruto stride past him without as much as looking at him from behind his mask. "*Uzumaki!* Seriously, you better stop right there or I'll—*Uzumaki!!!*"

Naruto never turned, never hesitated as he left the protective darkness of the side street they'd been waiting in and crossed the main street, heading straight towards the other alleyway, their original target catching sight of him almost instantly. Naruto merely glanced sideways at his hurried escape.

Sasuke slowly let go of a breath he hadn't been aware he'd been holding, relief and annoyance struggling inside him. In the end, he just sighed and moved to follow Naruto, ignoring the now triumphant voice in his head.

Making the right decisions... Sometimes, he admired the blond.

Part 42 - Thought

It was still dark outside, several hours before sunrise, when Naruto woke him that day.

Sasuke wasn't *really* surprised to find him standing there when he opened his door, very intend on killing the sorry bastard that thought it necessary to fucking wake him at such an ungodly hour of the morning.

"What the fuck do you want, Uzumaki," he growled in greeting, barely refraining from simply punching the moron through the next wall.

"Uh, Sasuke. We need to talk," Naruto replied nervously, fidgeting, his eyes never meeting Sasuke's.

"Oh, we do?"

"Yeah, 'cause there's this *thing* and... Well, I spent most of the night wondering and, y'know, *thinking*, but I don't really... I mean, uh..."

Sasuke took a deep breath, calming himself ever so slightly, when Naruto finally cast a quick glance at him, scratching his cheek sheepishly, a faint blush spreading across his naturally tanned face.

"What is it?" he grit out slowly, still glaring daggers at his teammate.

"It's... uh, probably very stupid, but... Sakura asked me i-if..." He looked away again, the blush intensifying.

"Naruto, talk or fuck off. *Now.*" There was something strange about the idiot's behavior and, given the circumstances, Sasuke did not feel bad for lacking a certain patience.

"She said- I mean... Are we... Ugh, Arewedatingeachother?" Naruto finally forced out, speaking so fast he almost stumbled over his own tongue towards the end, still looking everywhere but at the raven.

And while it took almost twenty seconds for his brain to process what the blond had said, it took only three for him to blush furiously and slam the door shut in the moron's face, completely ignoring Naruto's cry of, "Dammit Sasuke, it was just a *thought!*".

Part 43 - Order

"I . Told . You . To get the *fuck* down, you *asshole!*" Naruto hollered, all violent heat and white hot anger exploding into the room as he slammed the door shut behind him, eyes ablaze and *red*.

Sasuke merely shot him a glare, annoyance evident on his pale face.

"Don't you fucking *dare* to give me that look!" the blond warned furiously, closing the distance between them with a few forceful strides and grabbing the Uchiha by the collar of his white hospital gown, completely ignoring the raven's bandaged arm.

"Give me one goddamn reason to not just kick you off my team right now!" he hissed, pulling the other closer as he spoke until their noses were almost touching. "One reason, *Sasuke.*"

And for one second, there was defiance in the raven's eyes, sharp words on the tip of his tongue, but after an instant, he just averted his eyes, his lips shut in a tight line.

"I told you to get down, back there..." Naruto repeated, more gently, more intense this time, his grip on Sasuke's shirt loosening ever so slightly. "You had more than enough time to react. You didn't have to get hurt."

"I know," the raven whispered back darkly, biting back the usual insult just this once in silent acceptance of Naruto's anger. It might even have been the smallest hint of an apology.

For a short while, Naruto just stayed silent, unmoving. When he finally let go of the other, his face was hard and determined. But his eyes... They were back to blue – light, soft azure.

“Consider yourself warned,” he then said, almost formally, taking one step back from Sasuke’s bed and towards the door. “One more incident like this one and I’ll make sure you’re done with ANBU. Or rather, that ANBU is done with you. We don’t need people who disobey their captain purely out of spite and I won’t take your shit any longer. From now on, you *will* follow my orders, without hesitation, no matter what you think of them. Is that understood?”

Sasuke only nodded courtly, still avoiding the blond’s eyes, still looking like all he wanted to do was snap at Naruto and tell him to fuck off. But he didn’t. Couldn’t.

“As your captain,” Naruto continued at last, the shadow of a smile stealing itself onto his face, “I hope you’ll recover quickly. The team still needs you. As your *lover*, however...”

And suddenly, his voice was filled with ice, making Sasuke flinch uncomfortably.

“...I kindly advise you to stay here for as long as you can, ‘cause I *will* make you regret the day of your birth as soon as I get my hands on you. Good night, *honey*.”

Kapitel 18: Embrace, Betrayal & Future

Disclaimer: I do not own Naruto nor do I own it's characters. I make no money with this.

Author's Note: The mixture in this once again reminds me how randomly I posted these... Oo" Part 44 was the chapter I had most troubles with in this whole fic... It refused to turn out the way I wanted it to, while I refused to just let it slip. I think I spent at least two weeks on those few words. *stares* Part 45 was another troublesome case, 'cause the first version I posted was so damn incomprehensible that people thought god knows what... (Sakura killing Naruto was the weirdest interpretation I got, considering Naruto is obviously still alive...) So let me tell you this: Naruto is overdramatizing. Nothing *really* bad happened. Probably... Aaand, Part 46 is one of the first chapters I thought up when I decided I wanted to do this thing. It still ended up being one of the last ones I wrote though. Sometimes, I confuse myself.

Part 44 - Embrace

Sasuke never made anything easy for anyone, least of all for himself.

Sometimes, it was breaking Naruto. Knowing that Sasuke was dying inside – killing himself inside, for fuck's sake! – and knowing that he – he and no one else – was the knife that Sasuke used to cut his heart right out of his fucking chest. It hurt to see that Sasuke was suffering, always tormenting himself, be it consciously or not, and it *hurt* to know that he didn't realize Naruto was right there and suffering with him.

Sometimes, Naruto thought it would be so much easier if he could just bring himself to hate Sasuke. That it would hurt so much less if he could just force himself to turn away, if he didn't have to watch what Sasuke did to himself...

Sometimes, Naruto wondered if letting go was the way. Maybe if Sasuke hit the ground just once without Naruto being there to catch him, maybe he'd wake up then. Maybe getting back to his feet on his own was what he really needed. Maybe it'd be better that way.

Sometimes, Naruto just wished he had the strength *not* to be there when Sasuke stumbled.

'Let him fall, let him fall, let him fall...' he told himself, closing his eyes and holding his breath, knowing perfectly well that his arms would close around Sasuke the very moment he lost his balance.

Catching Sasuke was something he did out of reflex, no matter what his head told him.

Part 45 - Betrayal

"You betrayed me," Naruto stated tonelessly, neither anger nor hurt showing in his voice – it felt strange to have those words thrown at him without as much as a single emotion behind them. The blond's face was just as unreadable as his voice, giving away nothing, and something inside Sasuke wanted to curl up in a dark corner far, far away from here.

"I know," he almost-whispered, unable to look away from Naruto's eyes even though he really wanted to. Something in the blond's gaze just kept him from turning away, held him where he was. Maybe it was the intensity of the plain lack of emotions, or the distance that suddenly seemed to have torn them apart. It might also have been the kunai that Naruto twirled between his fingers – a wordless warning.

"I still can't believe it, Sasuke," Naruto said, a shadow of *sadness* creeping over his face as he looked down at Sasuke's feet for maybe a few seconds. It could have been minutes, theoretically. Sasuke wouldn't have been able to tell the difference. He only waited, air seemingly frozen in his lungs, until Naruto looked back up and finally – *finally* – glared at Sasuke with all the anger he was probably supposed to feel.

He had betrayed Naruto. He was – and had been, at the time – fully aware of that. Somehow.

When he spoke again, his voice was full of barely constricted anger, his eyes blazing red, his hands clenched into fists that Sasuke had no doubt could break at least half of his bones at once if the blond really decided to make this the time of their battle.

"I can't *believe* you... You *left* me!" Naruto said, his tone demanding an answer even if he hadn't asked the question. Yet. Sasuke knew it anyways. "After everything. After *promising* that..." He stopped, his glare softening. "After promising that you would... be with me."

Sasuke winced, unwilling to admit that he felt guilty, sickeningly guilty. Breaking their promise, betraying Naruto, he was painfully aware that he'd made just another mistake. *Another* one. Kind of.

"I'm sorry..." he offered weakly, wincing again when Naruto suddenly got to his feet and casually – so casually that it was almost predatory – crossed the room.

"Oh, you're sorry. Great. For getting me smashed in the first place or for leaving me there, alone, *helpless*, when you *knew* that Sakura was fucking drunk!?! When you knew

what she planned?"

"I... Both, probably..."

"Probably." Naruto's face went blank. "*Probably.*" He stopped, barely one step away from Sasuke, his body heat still somehow reaching the raven. "*Probably!*" And with that, he unzipped his jacket and pulled down the collar of his black shirt, revealing just exactly how much fun Sakura had had last night. "She left *hickeys* all over my fucking body! They're everywhere! *Everywhere!!* And all I remember is that you *left* when she glared at you! *You left me there!!*"

Sasuke swallowed thickly.

"I was her birth—"

"I don't fucking care if it was her birthday or what!!! You fucking sold me, you heartless, cheating bastard!"

Sasuke flinched, biting down the urge to correct Naruto on the fact that he had not sold him – it had simply been a cheap way to make their teammate happy – or that *he* hadn't exactly cheated on Naruto. Or told him that it had only been in self-defense. Because he had still betrayed Naruto.

...at least Sakura had smiled when Sasuke had last seen her...

Part 46 - Future

Naruto silently watched as Tsunade read the scroll, barely refraining from fidgeting. He watched as her brows furrowed in concentration and she blinked. He watched as she read it again, slower this time, more carefully. Then, he watched as she closed her eyes for a moment, inhaling deeply, and opened them again, a ever so tiny smile tugging on her lips.

He felt like all the stress and the worries of the past weeks were suddenly lifted off his shoulders, all the 'what if's and gloomy contemplations fading into oblivion.

Everything was going to be alright.

Next to him, Sasuke visibly relaxed, all the tension seemingly vanishing into thin air, leaving him almost completely boneless. For once, he actually looked his age, with a calm, almost peaceful look in his eyes and a small, tired smile of relief replacing his usual scowl.

Everything would work out somehow.

Tsunade stood, spread the scroll across her desk and looked at them with the pretense of annoyance, unable to hide her satisfaction. Sasuke shifted easily, from one second to the next perfectly untouched by her presence, the chains of the chakra absorbing shackles around his wrists clicking softly.

“Uchiha Sasuke, I hope you know the crimes you committed – since I will not read them out to you *again*. I will now tell you your punishment as decided upon by the Council, so you better listen carefully, *brat*.”

But Naruto was already grinning like an idiot – probably already planning where to go for his and Sasuke’s private celebration – and Sasuke looked like he just barely refrained from doing the same – probably not caring what Naruto had in store for him.

After all, they had a future now. Sasuke was alive. And free.

Kapitel 19: Perfection, Moron & Fear

Disclaimer: I do not own Naruto nor do I own it's characters. I make no money with this.

Author's Note: Nearing the end with giant leaps... Comparing this to the beginning, I really wonder where my "200 words per chapter" idea went... It kind of left me somewhere between the first chapter and here. *looks back doubtfully* But anyways. Part 47 is probably a little over the top in terms of fangirling, but I still think it describes Naruto quite well. (Give him a few years, and he'll be hot like that. >=D) And Part 48 is purely Sasuke and Naruto, no adds or butts, and Part 49 doesn't really need further explanation, I hope.

Part 47 - Perfection

Naruto was a work of sharp contrasts, inside and outside and down to the very core.

He was loud and obnoxious, a silent force at Sasuke's back, braggish about everything and nothing, yet modest when it mattered. He was dominant, yet oh so ready to submit, strong and determined and insecure like a child.

There were his eyes – those light azure depths that reflected everything that went on in the blond's heart and soul, always honest, always alive – and his gorgeous body – all lean muscle and sun-kissed skin, scarless and unmarred save for that one spot right above his heart. And there was his eye-catching appearance, his baggy clothes – hideously orange of all things! – hiding that body that Sasuke *knew* people would kill and die for and distracting from those *eyes* that could capture a person with one look alone. Attracting attention for all the wrong reasons...

There was his devotion to his village, to Konoha – the place where he'd grown up hated by everyone, the place where he'd been rejected and denied too many times to still remember all of them, the place where he'd found allies, friends, a makeshift family, or simply: the place where he belonged. And there was his devotion to Sasuke, his readiness to leave himself and his dreams behind for the one person he couldn't let go of.

He was softness and raw strength, an untamed force of nature if he put his mind to it, shaky and shockingly fragile in his existence. A soul so pure – *so true* – that it hurt to see him struggle through the painful process of *learning* faced with a world of death and darkness, powerful and *aware* and oh so tainted with his sins...

There was Naruto, free and wild and unbound, a cheerful whirlwind of chaos and life,

unafraid and brave in the face of danger, bright and radiant like a beagle light in the depth of night, open-hearted and tolerant and always ready to save, help and support.

And there was *Naruto* – the smile behind what had never truly been a mask – dark and dangerous and desperate and frustrated and fighting just to get through. Struggling and failing time and again. Helpless and alone, without perspective, hurt and betrayed and still *feeling* all those scars, doubting wandering, *wanting*. Needing.

Naruto was a work of sharp contrasts, inside and outside and down to the core. People just tended to overlook what should be screamingly obvious.

Part 48 - Moron

“I fucking told you I’m no good with that kind of explosives!!” Naruto hollered as he jumped off the next branch, propelling himself forward at neck-break speed. Sasuke fleetingly wondered how the heck he still managed to perfectly dodge all those goddamn low-hanging branches that he himself kept *almost* running into – even with his sharingan.

“That had nothing to do with being good with them!” he yelled right back, bringing his hands up just in time to avoid losing his left eye to one of those twigs that were so damn intent on getting in his way right now. The cut it left in his skin was deep enough to bleed.

“It was not my goddamn fault, asshole!” Naruto continued at just the same volume, completely ignoring Sasuke’s colorful cursing.

“Like *hell* it wasn’t!”

“Just shut the fuck up! How is it my fault that you can’t listen to me *for three goddamn seconds*? I told you your plan sucked and I told you so *twice*!!”

“Don’t you *fucking* blame your incapability on someone else! If you had just done what I told you to do there wouldn’t have been any pro—!”

“–*You fucking know I suck at genjutsu!!!*” Naruto suddenly exploded. There was absolutely no warning – except the obvious, of course – before his next action and Sasuke knew there was no chance to dodge the moment Naruto spun around and, seemingly without losing speed in the turn, came at him.

The impact was hard – the blond could be like a wall of concrete sometimes – and oh so unexpected – at least to Naruto, it seemed. Still, the blond somehow managed to spin them around before they hit the ground, taking the brute of the fall.

"You... Fuck, what the...!?" Naruto gasped after a few seconds of staring up into the treetops, small twigs they'd broken off on their way down and stray leaves raining down on them.

"Ugh," was all Sasuke managed, suddenly lacking the strength – and the will – to go on about how no one could actually *be* this stupid. "I hate you..."

For a few blessed seconds, it didn't matter that they'd been on the run within enemy territory only seconds ago or that it was all Naruto's damn fault or that Naruto stubbornly refused to accept this. The world was just sugar and sweets and rainbows – mixed with a lot of bruises and small cuts and oh well, whatever...

Then, about twenty enemy shinobi burst from the trees surrounding them and Sasuke remembered why he was still going to kill Naruto once this was over.

Part 49 - Fear

"It's not your fault, okay?" Sasuke yelled though the wooden door – locked and sealed and he was going to kick Naruto's ass just for that.

"Who's fault is it then, huh!?" Naruto's answering cry came right back, his voice *almost* breaking at the end. "It's my— It's *me*, god dammit! It's—"

"It's nobody's fault, Naruto," Sasuke tried again, pressing his forehead against the coolness of the door. Calm, Naruto needed him calm... Just this one time. "It was an accident, alright? Don't—"

"Sasuke, I *almost killed him*. I... Fuck, Kiba, I almost—"

"No, you didn't! It wasn't you, it was the Kyuubi! And Kiba's—"

"I *am* the Kyuubi, Sasuke!" Naruto exploded, so much anger and despair and whatnot in his voice that Sasuke finally decided that worry was more important than good manners. The door never stood much of a chance, Naruto's poor sealing skills be damned, one well aimed kick solving the problem in a matter of seconds.

Naruto was sitting at the far wall, curled in on himself, arms hugging his knees to his chest. His eyes, now wide from shock and anger, were still red and swollen from crying, his clothes still dirty and bloodied and burnt in some places. But the wounds had healed.

"Get *out!*" Naruto yelled at him after what couldn't have been more than three seconds and Sasuke glared harder and crossed the room. Kneeling down in front of the moron – because he *was* a moron, jounin or not – and pulling him into a tight

embrace, he completely ignored the blond's weak protests and how he tried to push him away.

"You fought him back down, okay?" he said firmly, his voice somewhat muffled by Naruto's neck. "You brought him back under control on your own, without Kakashi's help and without Yamato's help. You *saved* Kiba, okay? It's not your fault."

"I-I...—"

"And dog-face is alright. He would have told you so himself if Sakura hadn't tied him to his bed. No one else got hurt. It's alright, just trust me on that, okay?"

"It's never happened so sudden..." Naruto whispered, hands *finally* coming up to cling to Sasuke's back. "And there was no reason, I don't know why... I-I'm *scared*, Sasuke!"

And it was hard, really hard, to answer, to be reassuring, to tell him it was okay, when it was almost impossible to even *breathe* through the tightness in his chest, but Sasuke managed. He had to, for Naruto, just this once.

"I know," he whispered back, hugging the other boy—man even tighter. "But you'll get through this, Naruto. You're stronger than him."

Kapitel 20: Life

Disclaimer: I do not own Naruto nor do I own it's characters. I make no money with this.

Author's Note: This one is the final part. *Finally*. I can't even begin to describe how much trouble I had with this. I wanted to write a completely different scene, but then one of my friends went and said, "Oh, that doesn't fit them AT ALL!!" and gone was my idea. I think it took me at least four months to eventually get this finished afterwards... >.< (The original version was about thrice as long and overflowing with medical details that I couldn't imagine anyone would be interested in. So I shortened it down a bit. And thus, I had wasted 2 1/2 hours of my life on research on several medical topics...)

To everyone who read this through up to this point: Thank you so much!^^ I hope I didn't bore you too badly. *laughs* I also hope you find this final chapter to your liking, and that it isn't too much of a disappointment... ^^"

Part 50 - Life

Naruto felt like he was freezing to death with his insides aflame.

His heart was beating in his throat and his breath came in harsh, gasping pants, even as he desperately tried to calm down, calm down – '*Just calm down and don't freak out,*' he told himself, blinking rapidly to get the dizziness out of his head.

Sasuke's blood was uncomfortably hot on the bare skin of his hands.

Around them it was dark, the sheer density of the forest shielding away the last of what little light the thin crescent moon above the treetops and gray clouds could provide. The sun had set hours ago, leaving them to a blackness that seemed to swallow everything. It had gone haywire from that point on. Their surprise attack on one of Otogakure's last hideouts had turned into a disaster and their eventual forced retreat had been chaotic, the combat area spreading out wider with every passing second.

He'd never seen Sasuke's skin quite this pale.

"*Fuck...*" Naruto breathed faintly, voice high and thin and trembling, very nearly giving in on him. He barely recognized himself through the mess in his head, his mind entirely focused on the unmoving body in his arms.

Sakura didn't blink, didn't move – didn't even breathe for what could have been minutes or seconds. Her hands had frozen in midair, the torn fabric of what used to be Sasuke's shirt dangling loosely from her perfectly still fingers. Only her eyes never stopped moving – taking in everything at once, it seemed, every cut and bruise and scratch – the look in them sharp, alert and deadly serious.

"He's—he's going to make it, right?" he forced himself to ask, and the heavy silence that was Sakura's reply made him shiver with unnatural cold. "*Sakura*," he breathed, both faint and intense, as a surge of helpless desperation washed over him. Why was she *looking* like that!? Why was she still staring, why wasn't she actually *doing* anything!?

"I don't *know*," was all she said eventually, her words nothing more than a sharp hiss of air through clenched teeth and Naruto's heart skipped a beat or two. "Shikamaru," she then called without turning, her tone never losing that edge of urgency. "I need Blood Replenishing Pills. A lot of them."

And then, for just the briefest moment, her eyes flickered to Naruto. It was nothing more than a quick glance, cast at him through the few loose strands of pink hair that had escaped the ponytail at the back of her head and had fallen into her face, her attention back on Sasuke before Naruto had even fully realized what he had seen in those eyes. But he had seen it nevertheless.

"Fuck," he breathed shakily, clenching his hands into fists to fight down the sudden trembling that took control of his whole body. "Fuck, fuck, fuck, *fuck!*"

If she'd punched him, right in the face and without holding back, it couldn't have hurt more than that short moment of open *fear*. It hit Naruto with the force of an oncoming train, shattering that already ridiculously small and helplessly desperate sliver of hope he'd been clinging to – that Sakura was Sakura, after all, and that as long as she was with them, she would be able to patch them back up, no matter what happened, and that this, *this*, this coldness, this darkness, this promise of loneliness, couldn't touch them just as long as she was *there with them*. That *death* couldn't reach them.

But Sakura was scared.

The realization washed over him like a wave of cold water, his chest tightening painfully, making it almost impossible to breathe through the sudden rush of panic.

Sasuke was dying.

Here and now, right here in Naruto's arms and with Sakura leaning over him, Sasuke was fucking *dying*. He was dying – Naruto was losing him. He could almost feel the life pouring out of him with every single drop of blood he lost and— There was blood everywhere. So much of it, too much of it, no matter where his flickering eyes glanced. Sasuke's whole chest was one entire bloody mess, all kinds of cuts and gashes zig-zagging across it. Too fucking much of it, *too fucking much!*

Sasuke shouldn't be bleeding this heavily, he shouldn't be *dying* out here in enemy territory in the middle of the night! He shouldn't—

"Hey," Kiba said sharply from just behind him, one hand grabbing Naruto's shoulder. He hadn't realized he'd been swaying until the Inuzuka steadied him, jerking him out of his increasingly hysteric thoughts.

Sasuke was dying on him. He was losing him.

"My god," he barely whispered, his vision blurring with tears even as he tried to regain his composure, eyes impossibly wide and focused only on all that red that seemed to crawl up his arms.

Uchiha Sasuke was—

"Naruto," Sakura said very sharply, her voice cutting right through the rising panic. "Deep breaths, you're hyperventilating. I don't need you fainting on me right now."

With a quick flick of her wrist, she flung away the kunai she'd used to cut Sasuke's vest off, the blind motion in itself a carelessness that was entirely unlike her. Nimble fingers danced across Sasuke's bared chest, butterfly-touches, testing, assessing the damage. Naruto took a deep breath, suddenly too busy with fighting back the wave of nausea that hit him at the sight.

"Gods..."

So much blood. So many injuries... There was a stab wound just below Sasuke's ribs that looked like someone had thrust in a kunai and *twisted*, a long, almost vertical gash at his right shoulder, dangerously close to his neck, and another cut that looked like his opponent had tried to simply slice off his entire torso running almost horizontally across his stomach. His left shoulder was covered in tiny glass shards that had bitten deep enough into his skin to almost disappear completely, and Naruto was almost sure a few of his ribs were broken as well. There was also a fair amount of other injuries – most of them cuts and scratches, some of which had already started to dry and crust over – and an awful lot of bruises.

Something like this was not just the outcome of the last battle, Naruto suddenly realized with sick, but mind-clearing horror. Some of those wounds must have been caused at least a few hours ago.

"I-I didn't even—," he started, voice cracking with pain at the realization, "I didn't even notice he was hurt..."

In fact, he hadn't noticed anything was wrong right until he'd heard Sakura's call over the noise of the last fight and spun around only to see Sasuke motionless on the mossy ground, his opponent swinging his sword at the raven's unprotected head. The next moment, Akamaru was ripping the man's throat out, blood splattering the gras around them as he went down with a gurgling sound.

He couldn't remember how the fight had ended – besides from the fact that they had obviously won. It was all a misty haze in his head, but he knew that he'd never killed so many in so little time, never felt such *pain*, such despair, even when he'd told himself that he was okay, that Sasuke was only knocked out, maybe injured, yes, but not badly.

He only remembered skidding to a halt and dropping to his knees by Sasuke's side – not exactly in that order as the buzzing pain in his legs suggested – turning him over with the raven's name on his lips, his stomach twisting into sick knots as he saw the bloody mess that was his partner. And then, Sakura had been there with him, kunai in hand, cutting away the soaked fabric of Sasuke's clothes, baring all those wounds and—

And suddenly, his pink-haired teammate burst into action.

"I need those damn pills, Shikamaru!" Sakura almost-yelled at their captain, then whipped around to shout at Kiba, "You, go! Find Ino, Hinata – anyone with medical skills, however limited they may be. Someone has to be out there! I can't do all of this by myself. You've got five minutes, ten at the most – don't just *stand* there!"

"I'll go with five, then," Kiba acknowledged courtly, tensely, already turning as the words left his mouth. He whistled for Akamaru, the huge dog exploding into motion and in the blink of an eye, they were gone.

"You," Sakura finally turned back to him, one hand suddenly coming up to ever so slightly slap him on the cheek, "Snap out of it already! I need you here with me right now."

She pushed back the sleeves of her turtleneck top, crimson smears staining her bare arms where her bloodied fingers had touched skin, and fixed her ponytail to keep her bangs from falling into her eyes. There was no trace of hesitation, not the slightest touch of doubt left in her movements, her face hard with determination as her eyes stared right into his.

She really was a pro, Naruto suddenly realized with startling clarity, blinking once, then shaking his head as if it actually helped get rid of the chaos in his mind.

"Is he—?"

"I haven't given up just yet," she told him courtly, a sharp warning to shut up and work. Shikamaru was at her side barely half a second later, a small box in his hands, his sleeves pushed back as well. "But he's lost way too much blood already and the pills alone won't work. I can't close all of his wounds by myself – we're incredibly lucky if my chakra's enough to at least stop the worst of the bleeding and even then, all of that would just be enough to buy us some time..."

"Will he make it?" Naruto cut her off, finally forcing himself to repeat the question that he was no longer sure he even wanted answered, flinching visibly when Sakura

grabbed his right arm and tore off his sleeve.

“He might,” she said, pushing the cloth into his hand, then directing his hand to press it to the stab wound on Sasuke’s stomach. “Stay like that,” she ordered, then finally, *finally*, gathered chakra into her hand, the soft green glow and the sudden feeling of warmth and softness soothing some of the agony in Naruto’s heart.

When her fingers touched Sasuke’s skin, radiating *life* and love and *hope*, Naruto closed his eyes, for the first time in his entire life regretting the fact that he had no god to pray to. His heart was still beating in his throat and his breath still came in harsh, gasping pants. But beneath his fingers, he could feel Sakura’s chakra starting to pulse through Sasuke’s body, and though he’d never felt so helpless before, he clung to the fact that she *hadn’t given up just yet*.

“He... wouldn’t leave you alone like this,” Sakura then whispered ever so softly and suddenly, Naruto realized that he was crying.